

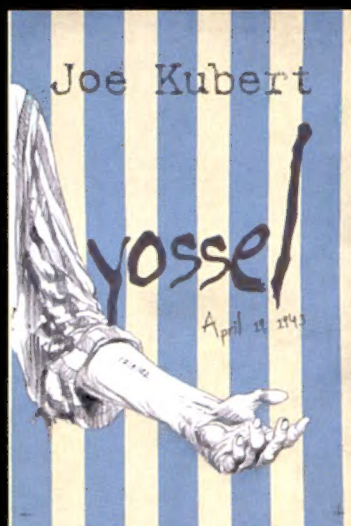
COMICS

BOOK MARKETPLACE

No. 116

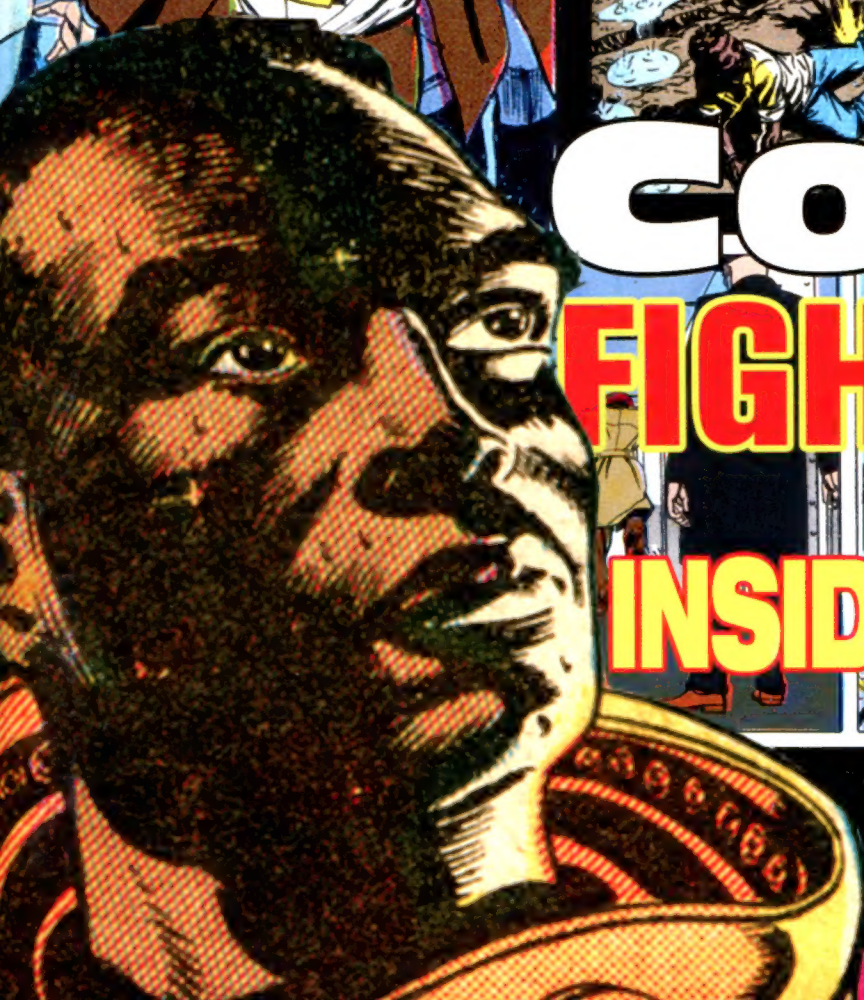
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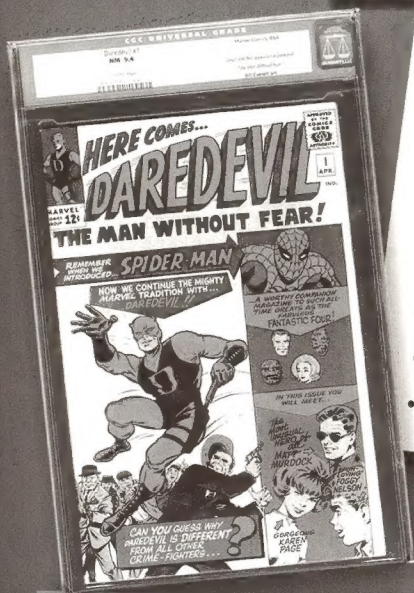
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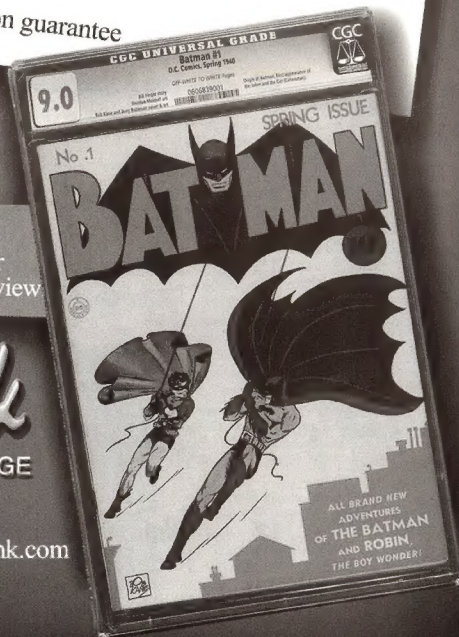
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BOOK MARKETPLACE

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October
2004

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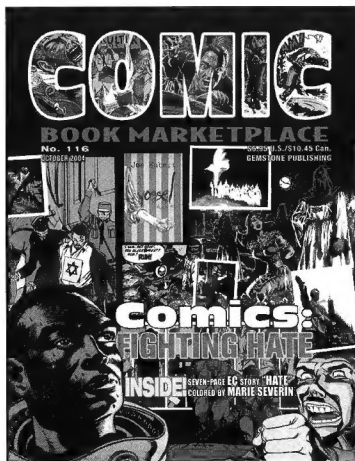
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Number 116, October 2004.

What are "comics"?

As a recent Letter to the Editor pointed out, some people think of comics as performers like Steve Martin, George Carlin and Richard Pryor. Stand-up comics.

To some people, the comics are daily strips and colored Sunday strips that come with their newspaper. Newspaper comics.

Maybe we should define some terms. Traditionally, a *book* is printed on a sheet-fed press, bound in a bindery and offered for sale at a book store. A *magazine* is a periodical, usually printed on web presses using giant rolls of paper, which is placed on sale at a newsstand or variety store with a very limited shelf life. Unlike books, copies of magazines which fail to sell within the display period are destroyed.

When we were kids we all collected comic books which, according to the above definitions, were not books at all, but magazines. The very first comic books, i.e., books containing comic art, started to appear the last half of the 19th century. One of the earliest examples can be found in the *Brownies* books written and illustrated by Palmer Cox. The hardcover *Mutt & Jeff* books and all the comic character books published by Cupples & Leon are examples of these early comic books. These were most popular in the period from 1900 to the 1920s. Whitman's long series of Big Little Books had their greatest popularity in the 1930s and early 1940s before being drowned by comic magazines.

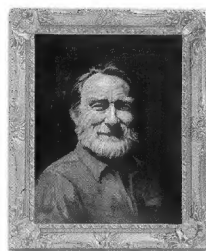
The first comic magazines appeared in the early 1930s, mostly in a tabloid format, like Dell's *The Funnies* and H. L. Baker's *Comic Cuts*. These were big, floppy newspaper-like magazines which were intended to sell on a newsstand for 5¢, but the format never took off. Because of their size and floppiness, they were awkward to display on newsstands with other magazines, and, even though they sold for only a nickel, they were never very popular...after all, why pay a hard-earned 1930 nickel for something that looks just like the Sunday section of the newspaper?

This issue's lead article, "How the Jews Created Comics," tells the story of M.C. Gaines and his inspirational idea of printing four-color comics on newspaper presses and ending up with a mass market product which sold for only a dime. It was the height of the Depression and comic books, as we call them, mushroomed in popularity. The only thing M.C. Gaines did in 1933 was to have the brilliant idea to fold a tabloid-size comic once more, creating the convenient size of a Golden Age comic book. Which is not a book, it's a magazine.

So, while the art form of the comics was born in the 1800s and blossomed in newspapers during the first half of the Twentieth Century, the lightning bolt which created comic books as we know them was a marketing decision. It was as simple, and as profound, as taking a product which did not sell very well and folding it over once, saddle-stitching it and making it the right size to fit a kid's hands. And selling it for a dime, which compared to the cost of admission to the movies for a kid in the 1930s.

It might be argued that *someone* had to eventually make this discovery to create the format for the modern comic book—er—magazine, but history tells us that it was Charlie Gaines, who did it in 1933. His son, Bill Gaines, was a good friend of mine, and he certainly put his own stamp on the history of the medium with his ground-breaking EC comics, which many aficionados think were the greatest comic books ever published. Bill was never one to follow the crowd, and the success of his horror and sci-fi comics was soon emulated by the rest of the industry. He was also the first to use popular comic titles like *Weird Science* and *Shock SuspenStories* to teach his readers about issues of social importance like racial and religious prejudice. This important issue of *CBM* is dedicated with love to my friend Bill Gaines.

Russ Cochran
Editor & Publisher



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Michael missed

Wow, I sure hope *this* was a one-time mistake. I know Russ Cochran wants to make his mark, but if you lose the market reports, Naiman's column, and the rest, you are going to lose a lot of readers.

The magazine is called *Comic Book Marketplace*. Please don't trash the concept just to move some other periodical (ahem).

I'd hate to cancel, but this is the meat of the magazine for me. If it goes, so do I.

Eric Martin
Subscriber since issue #50

Thanks for writing, Eric. It was not a mistake, omitting Michael Naiman's column and "Market Reports" for that one issue. What happened was that Michael was just getting ready to go to San Diego for the big convention just as that issue went to press. He wanted to wait until after San Diego to do his report, and if we had waited, it would have made that issue late, so Michael and I agreed that we would skip his column in that particular issue. Just a one-time thing, so don't worry! As you'll see in this issue, he's baaaack!

RC

So cool, and crazy hip

WOW! Just got the copies of *CBM* #114 and I'm knocked out by the great profile you guys gave me! Thanks a million! I really wasn't expecting anything so cool—I thought it was gonna be a little black and white sidebar!

CBM reserves the right to edit letters selected for publication for length and/or content.

**Send communications to: Comic Book Marketplace,
PO Box 469, West Plains, MO 65775,
or e-mail us at cbm@gemstonepub.com.**

FANTASTIC! Your pal,

Pete von Sholly
Sunland, CA

Glad to do it, Pete. We enjoyed your artwork and had the room to feature it in color, so we did!

RC

Devilish details

In Pat Calhoun's column "The Creepy Classics" (*CBM* #114), he opines that the adaptation of Le Fanu's *Carmilla* in *Creepy* #19 was cut from Russ Jones' *Treasury of Terror* paperback. That's close. I wrote that adaptation for Jones. It was originally intended for a second paperback collection that he was editing. I guess *Treasury of Terror* didn't sell well, and so the second one was never finished. In the interview that Bill Schelly did with me in *Alter Ego* #28 (Sep 2003) I talked quite a bit about how I came to do that adaptation (and how I never got paid). I did make an error in the interview though, I now realize. I said that *Carmilla* was to appear in a collection that was to be a follow-up of Jones' *Dracula* paperback. I had forgotten that *Treasury of Terror* had come out in between.

John Benson
New York NY

Thanks for straightening that out, John. And thanks also for your contribution to issue 115, where we conversed about auteurs in the comics.

RC

Mystery date

Look, I really enjoy *CBM* and buy it every month. But last month, the latest issue comes in and its dated *June*, what the heck is up with that??? I know that most of the articles aren't date related. It hardly matters when talking about comics that were published from

the '30s upward. However some of the market numbers are totally out of date. I don't care about that section much, but some do I'm sure.

So, my suggestion is just get rid of the month date and keep the issue number. That way I don't have to know the magazine I'm buying in September went to the publisher sometime in the middle of *June* or so.

Thanks for all the hard work... love the color cover section as well. Be good.

Kirk Halter
Lincoln, NE

Since CBM is not a newsstand magazine it is not dated ahead like most newsstand magazines are. As you probably know, newsstand magazines are cover-dated two to three months ahead so that, for example, an issue with a September cover date usually reaches the newsstand in June or July. We will probably be doing that, too, if we start having CBM distributed to newsstands. At present, though, CBM usually appears during the month that appears on the cover. This issue is #116, the October issue, and we actually print and mail it in early-to-mid October. And I agree that the month printed on the cover really doesn't matter...what matters is that you don't miss an issue!

RC

When I was a small kid growing up in Monterey, I was collecting comic books from my local grocery store. I would sit up in my tree house with the local neighborhood boys and read the Silver Age Spider-Man, Fantastic Four, Jimmy Olsen and Herbie. I got hooked on comics when my father took me to the barbershop and the barber would have comic books laid out on his table. Comic books were great escapism for me. One day, my mother wanted me to get rid of my large collection of comic

books and I took all of my comic books and hid them in the crawlspace of our home. That is how much I valued comic books. When I got into the Army, I sort of fell out of the comic book world. Then one day I got married and my wife at the time showed me a comic book store, I did some glances and walked away. I told her that was my past and I didn't want to get into comic book collecting again. About two weeks later, Pat (my ex-wife) brought home the Death of Superman series. I read them and I was hooked once again. Before I knew it I was buying comic books left and right and became a well-known letter hack to the comic books I read. I always wanted to publish my own comic book and Pat assisted me with getting a well-known comic book artist named Brandon (Dark Horse *Godzilla*) McKinney to do the artwork for my comic book called *The Legendary Dark Silhouette*. I accomplished my goal of self-publishing my own comic book. I had a strong desire to promote aspiring comic book writers and artists—people who wanted to work on a comic book or publish their own comic book. Then one day a fellow co-worker named Jeff Scott Clifford and I started working on our own newsletter called the Peoples' Comic Book Newsletter. Jeff and I went to various comic book conventions and met with many artists and writers. Before I knew it, the newsletter caught on fast and many artists and writers jumped on board to work on the newsletter for free!

One of the best things that happened to Jeff and I was when a guy named TW Montgomery joined my staff. TW Montgomery was an expert website designer and created Jazma Online! (www.jazmaonline.com).

Jazma Online! is the online version of the Peoples' Comic Book Newsletter. Jazma Online! is the star search for aspiring comic book writers and artists.

The Peoples' Comic Book Newsletter and Jazma Online! are very well established within the comic book community and the website alone has had over a million hits. If it weren't for my staff the newsletter would not exist,

as for the website that is a different story, because so many people around the world contribute their wares for the website.

In the Jazma Universe that has two portals, the website and newsletter, I can be whatever I want to be and that is the fun part of comic books, you can blur reality with fantasy. For people who dream about breaking into animation and comic books as writers or artists, keep that dream alive; stay focused and get your work seen by the professionals in the industry! Good luck!

Paul Dale Roberts, President
Jazma Online!
Peoples' Comic Book Newsletter

No guts, no glory

Enjoyed the last three issues quite a bit. Since I only buy *Catwoman* and *Thanos* titles from the big two (excluding reprint material), I felt those articles validated my preferences and I loved the article on Gulacy. It's too bad the thinking in the medium hasn't progressed enough where they can give the artist top billing rather than the writer on the cover and splash. Yes, I know without the writer there is no story, but without the superstar artist there are no sales.

Issue 112 may be the best issue to date. It took guts to run as many full page color covers as you did and it couldn't have worked any better. Sure some text was lost but here more was less and then some. This was a buy-a-second-copy book for sure. I originally thought incorporating the color into the written article pages was more effective but now I can see that is not the case. The only thing I thought could have been handled differently was I might have kept the pre-Code horror article as a stand alone feature and re-visit the '70s DC horror down the line. It also appears the theme issues as opposed to the regular issues are becoming my

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favorite.

Last issue, #113, aside from the cover numbering glitch, was quite enjoyable. Russ, your piece really took me back. Yourself, as well as Mark in his excellent *Atom* #12 feature, touched on how as kids both of you traded for your favorite comics. For me the problem wasn't purchasing or trading for the right books, instead it was getting the comics past my dad, who, while he permitted funny animal, *Classics Illustrated* and war comics, was dead against anything that wasn't reality based. That meant no horror, super-hero or anything with a fantasy/fiction slant of any kind. Fortunately my dilemma wasn't that hopeless as my Mom smuggled them in for me and I became quite good at that as well in time. As you well know it was a different world then. For the most part by the time you were 14, and certainly before age 16, you were well expected to be finished with comics. As a fellow survivor of the pre-comic shop era I can admit I felt embarrassed (even) going to the neighborhood Smoke Shop, then in my twenties and buying comics.

Last, the Nedor and Cover Recreation features will be well received by most and I am no exception. You might want to include more of the covers full page size as you had in the previous issue. Anyway thanks for the remembrances when you were young to the world of comics, and feel free to stroll down memory lane anytime. As always, the best,

Mike Egan
via e-mail

What was it?

I am a huge fan of *CBM*, I purchase it every month from my comic book

store here in Knoxville (Comix Exchange). I was wondering if any of you experts at *CBM* could help me locate a comic book from my childhood that I have been searching for for decades.

This is what I know: It was like *Creepy* or *Eerie* (it could have been one of them or an independent), it was in black and white and came out in the late 1960s. There was a story in it about a human man and woman who were on the run from some creatures. As I recall, it was set either in the future or on another planet where humans were slaves to these creatures. The couple had a baby. They were found and slaughtered by these creatures. The artwork was Frazetta-like.

This tale left a profound mark on me as a child. It was the first time I had ever encountered something so powerfully rendered with such a downbeat ending. I would love to find this magazine and reclaim a copy. If any of your staff—Michelle, Will, Bill, or anybody out there—*anybody* who might be able to shed light on this for me. Thanks so much!

Gary Swaf
via e-mail

Readers, can you help Gary identify this story? Write to CBM and we will publish your letter!

RC

He bought in

First off, let me congratulate you on a wonderful magazine! I've been enjoying *CBM* since issue 79, but the latest issues have been beautiful! Not only are they insightful to this collector of only ten years (not counting my childhood), but they have been a virtual treasure trove of invaluable information! From the in-depth articles to the beautiful full color photos of books I could never afford, I treasure each and every issue. One issue in particular though, #108 to be exact, led me to purchase an awesome comic! First, let me say that I really enjoyed the article on

George Carlson and *Jingle Jangle* comics. I was able to find a VG+ copy of issue 30 for a modest \$6 at a local shop, and I love the artistic style and humor! But, that is not the comic I was referring to. I'm referring to "Frazetta's Fairy Tale," which reprinted a gorgeous story from a scarce *Happy Comics* #33. Not two days after reading this article, I'm searching Frazetta on eBay (because I'm fascinated by Frazetta's pre-painting comic work) and lo and behold, the very same comic, in a gorgeous solid "fine" condition, with a "buy it now" option just a couple of bucks over *Guide*!! If not for your article, I would have waited, and tried to get that book for less than the buy it now price, and it may very well have disappeared! I love Frazetta's pen and ink even more so than his painting (if you can believe that), and have a nice collection of comics with his work. So, thanks! One thing though, about the latest issue (#114) that disappointed me is the lack of the "Naiman Report" and the "Market Report." These are two very main reasons I buy your mag, and honestly have to say, I might pick and choose what issues I buy from now on if you don't carry those features. I think it would be a poor choice to drop them. Still a great mag, regardless though.

John Petty
Coram, NY

Thanks for your nice letter, John. If you'll read my response above to Eric Martin's letter, you'll see that Michael Naiman and his column were simply skipped for one issue because of a timing situation. We have no intention of dropping either Michael's column or the "Market Report."

RC

Bowing, but unbowed

Ipicked up *CBM* #114 from my local comic shop today. What a fantastic issue. I was impressed with the cover, content and the entire book. I run a website about monster and horror comic books—www.comicmonsters.com.

It was great to see an entire issue dedicated to that genre. Take a bow! Regards,

Rob (TheBigBadWolf) Caprilozzi
via e-mail
Comic Book Monster Fans Unite!

Okay, Wolfie, I am taking a bow. Tell everyone on your website about CBM!

RC

Another Day

Just wanted to let you know that "Wentworth's Day" was reprinted in *Eerie* #13 (the cover story with a painting by Dick Prezio). It may interest you to know that I have a copy of *Christopher Lee's Treasury Of Terror*. My late father, who worked for the Salvation Army in the 60's and loved horror and fantasy, was always bringing home stuff like that from pick ups. Best,

Brian K. Snyder
via e-mail

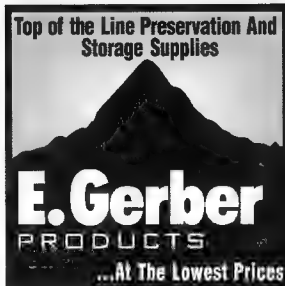
Giordano's Hour

In response to Dan Braun's question in *CBM* #114, I think *GL/GA* #76 is a reasonable candidate for the beginning of the Bronze Age if you define the essence of the Bronze Age as the emergence of the individual creators from the company style that had dominated the Silver Age. It predates *Conan* #1 by about a half-year, which would be the Marvel title that most typified that change at the time.

I'd tend to the theory, however, that the reason we can't identify and agree on a clear start to the Bronze Age, as we can with the Silver, is that it really wasn't an Age at all—or not in the same sense of a clear change from what came before. The years after the Silver Age (or as the Silver Age ebbed, as my previous note argues) were a time of transition. It isn't until the field changed with the birth of titles aimed specifically at the comic shops that we get to a genuine new age, probably best marked by *Star*Reach* #1 in 1974. That begins a new era of creator
[continued on page 68]

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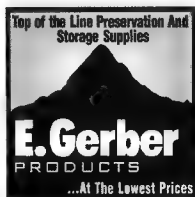
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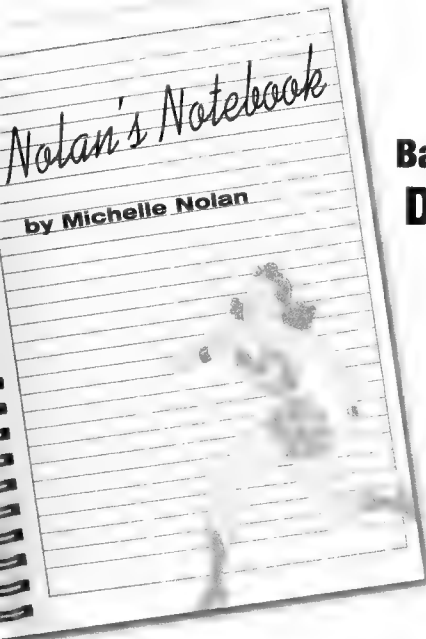
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Back to the "Girl of the Future" DC's Astra was a space pioneer

One of my favorite childhood memories, caused by an early penchant for endlessly rummaging through back-issue comic book stacks in dusty bookstores, was the surprising discovery of one of the first comic books with a genuine heroine of the spaceways.

At about the time Adam Strange and his long-distance romance with Alana of the planet Rann began in *Showcase* #17 late in 1958, I discovered one of the final issues of the long-running Golden Age title *Sensation Comics*.

This was issue 102 (Mar-Apr 1951), with a cool Wonder Woman cover in her swashbuckling answer to the challenge of "The Queen of the South Seas!" To a 10-year-old, as I was that year, a 7-year-old comic book seems ancient indeed, and it was the first time I was ever aware that Wonder Woman had appeared in a comic book other than her own.

But what was this little plug in fancy script lettering bannered across the top of the cover: "Astra, Girl of the Future!" Who ever herd of such a heroine in comics? Remember, this was before even Supergirl made her debut in *Action Comics* in 1959. Other than Wonder Woman, there were no super heroines, either of the present or the future, in the comic books of 1958—the year the



Sensation #99 (Sep/Oct 1950), first Astra story.

United States entered the Space Age with the launching of the first successful American satellite, Explorer I.

I eagerly flipped through this issue of *Sensation* #102 and was delighted to discover a character the like of which I had never seen before. She was heralded

by the big, bold red letters "Astra" similar to the logo of *Strange Adventures*, which by that time was one of the most beloved titles in my burgeoning, shelf-straining collection.

A girl? In space? As the heroine? Well...I had seen Dale Arden in re-runs

of the original Flash Gordon serials, and Wilma in the Buck Rogers serial, and a few female space sidekicks on television shows such as Rocky Jones. But such women were almost always supporting characters at best. Astra promised to be something entirely new (or old, as the case may have been.).

"Three rocket-freighters missing in space without a single clue to their disappearance!" the splash-page blurb began. "That was the baffling mystery which confronted Astra, citizen of New Futura in the year 2150 A.D.! But as the peerless girl of tomorrow, in her role as ace telecaster of Transvideo News, took up the trail, a breath-taking series of events forced her to play another part—*Private Enemy* #1 to all public enemies!...and that included the criminal mastermind responsible for...The Port of Missing Space Ships!"

Who could resist a comic book story with such a blurb? They sure weren't producing them like that in 1958! Here was something entirely original. Or so I thought, since I still had not encountered the numerous heroines in back issues of Fiction House's *Planet Comics*, which pretty much had the science fiction market cornered in the 1940s but vanished by 1954.

As comic books go, though, Astra really was an original. She was a brilliant, athletic redhead, complete with bare midriff, purple miniskirt and matching boots. Definitely a fascinating character! Indeed, she looked vaguely like a futuristic rock star.

As this fascinating story unfolds, Astra rescues a rocket-freighter pilot, Captain Bart, whom she finds floating in space, the unwitting victim of space bandits who had turned a planetoid into a rocket-robbery base. She and Bart foil the scheme with a clever plan that turned the bad guys' space mines against them. As a reward, the Interspace Patrol awards her the Diamond Star (remember, diamonds are even a space girl's best friend!)

Well! Astra was certainly different from any comic book character I had ever seen. As it turned out, she was the

first (and last) of her type, DC or otherwise. I had a 10-year-old's visions of trying to find a long-running, heretofore undiscovered series of glorious

Astra adventures in *Sensation* or other titles. But such was not to be.

By the mid-1960s, I had scrounged up a couple more issues of *Sensation*, but there were no Astra stories. These issues, it turned out, were too early. Then, a couple of years after fandom pioneer Jerry Bails published his DC Index in 1963, I obtained a copy of this historic index. I discovered, to my dismay, that Astra appeared in only eight issues of *Sensation*—#99 (Sep-Oct 1950) through #106 (Nov-Dec 1951), the last issue before the title became a weird mystery type.

I eventually put together a long run of *Sensation*, including all the issues with Astra, while learning that my original impression was, indeed, quite accurate. There was nothing quite like the Girl of the Future in all of DC Comics history.

Astra was introduced at the same time as DC's first science fiction title, *Strange Adventures*. Indeed, there was a house ad for *Strange Adventures* #1 (Aug-Sep 1950) on the inside front cover of *Sensation* #99. This may have been sheer coincidence, and yet...

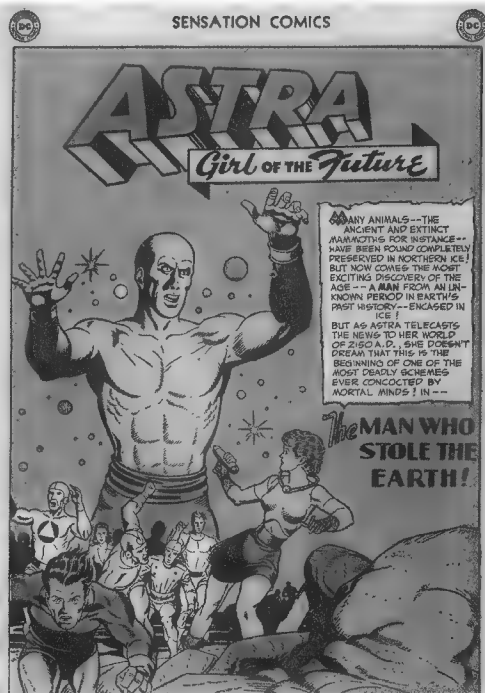
DC, then known as National Comics, was in the middle of a two-year fling with all-heroine issues of *Sensation Comics* (#94-106)—the final issues of a



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classic anthology title that was one of the last remnants of DC's once mighty Golden Age super hero line. The all-girl effort fizzled, but not because these intriguing comics lacked quality.

These issues of *Sensation* were uncommon examples of DC's versatility and still have a diverse appeal to



Sensation #104 (Jul/Aug 1951).

collectors of super heroes (Wonder Woman), science fiction (Astra, Girl of the Future) and love comics (Romance, Inc., starring Ann Martin, who was sort of Ann Landers a few years before there

was an Ann Landers advice column). There was also a nice strip starring the intrepid Dr. Pat, a well-written physician/detective. These were women of strength and courage—qualities uncommon in the comics of the era.

I've often wondered whether Astra was originally intended for *Strange Adventures* but was placed in *Sensation* along with its other heroines because Astra fit the *Sensation* format. In fact, Astra had intriguing potential and turned out to be one of the best undeveloped (no pun intended!) characters in DC history. In 1950, plot lines involving a

telecasts for Trans-Video News in the 22nd century. After all, even by that time society couldn't trust a female with a real rocket!

Astra came along during a period in which DC experimented with a multitude of new titles and formats after being largely dominated by super heroes through 1947—teen humor, westerns, romance, science fiction, horror/fantasy, police/crime, movie and television adaptations, war and more. And even though DC abandoned the heroine format after *Sensation* #106, Astra could have—and perhaps should have—been placed in *Strange Adventures* or *Mystery in Space*, both of which were apparently swelling well by the end of 1951.

The first Astra story, "The Strange Color Out of Space" in *Sensation* #99, was the only 6-pager in the series; the other seven stories were 8-pagers. Her first words were intriguing: "Now that assignment center has appointed me to be a trans-video reporter, I have to get to where the news is happening—while it's happening!"

That was an accurate assessment of the ultimate goal of television news services—a goal that would be met not in 200 years from 1950, but in fewer than 50 years, with the advent of satellites and the Internet. Commercial television in 1950 was in its infancy,

and, of course, Astra's tools must have seemed fanciful, indeed. But the principles in her words above would turn out to be the very lifeblood of television news. Can any of us imagine turning on television news now and not seeing first-hand reports from "where the news is happening—while it's happening!" as Astra put it.

Astra, aided by alien survivors of a spaceship crash on Earth, foils a renegade scientist after she rescues the aliens by risking a flight in her rockette that covers "ten thousand miles in seven minutes!" While it might seem strange to nit-pick a DC science fiction story, even then that would have been bad science. Escape velocity from Earth is seven miles per second, and Astra was zooming along at about 24 miles per second, meaning she would not have been able to remain within Earth's gravitational field!

There's a nice touch in the opening panel of the second story, "The Invader from the Ninth Planet!" in *Sensation* #100 (Nov-Dec 1950). "A strange rocketship! Never saw anything like it in Jan's Rocketship Directory!" is Astra's opening line, with an in-joke about the famous Jane's military catalogs. That's one of the most amusing aspects about reading comics as an adult—you catch things you doubtless missed as a youngster.

Astro foils a plot originating on Pluto, and in the process drops through space for a few seconds from a commandeered Plutonian ship—which then blows up an Earth-threatening asteroid—and then lands onto her Rockette. She says "I don't know if anyone has ever left a rocketship in mid-air this way...but I've got to try it!" That, of course, would have been impossible at her stated height of 100 miles into space. Poor Astra would have imploded, boots and all. She wonders at story's end what the ruler of Pluto would next have in store for Earth—but that storyline was never pursued through the rest of the series.

Astra works with a handsome scientist, Rex Rockwell, in her third adventure, a multi-dimensional adventure entitled "Conquerors of the Flame" in #101 (Jan-Feb 1951). But it was Captain Bart who was Astra's sidekick in the aforementioned #102.

"The voyage of the Time Capsule" in #103 (May-Jun 1951) paired Astra with a third study hero, Professor Elliott, for her first trip to another planet, the mythical Korl, where they rescue yet another race of aliens. This is perhaps



Sensation #105 (Sep/Oct 1951).

female "ace telecaster" were groundbreaking, but Astra foreshadows many of the women who work in the media today, especially on the likes of MTV's youth-oriented shows and other cable telecasts.

Not that the strip was entirely liberated, by any means—Astra uses a "Rockette" to zip through New Futura and the space lanes while presenting live

the weakest story in the series, but "The Man Who Stole the Earth!" in #104 (Jul-Aug 1951) more than made up for it with a fantastically plotted tale of an invader from Venus who pretends to be from Earth's past as he is thawed out from a frozen block of ice. Instead, he finds a way to shift Earth's orbit closer to Venus, only to see Astra find a way to reverse the process. Rex Rockwell is back to help Astra in this one—the fourth consecutive adventure in which Astra is aided by a handsome hunk.

Rockwell returns for a third adventure with Astra in "S.O.S. from Space" in #105 (Sep-Oct 1951), one of the scarcest issues in the entire *Sensation* run. This is my favorite Astra story, since she discovers that a race of giant ants on an unnamed, previous unexplored planet is actually the most intelligent form of life and is being threatened by a race of primitive cavemen. Astra finds a way to rescue the ants with a "field of force"—the same force that protects her spaceship from meteor strikes.

One of DC's last—and scarcest—Golden Age comics was *Sensation* #106 (Nov-Dec 1951), the final issue before the title's conversion to a weird/mystery title for its last ten issues (it was still known as *Sensation* for #107-109, then *Sensation Mystery* for #110-116). *Sensation* #105 was the last 52-page



Sensation #106 (Nov/Dec 1951), last Astra story—looks like Murphy Anderson art.

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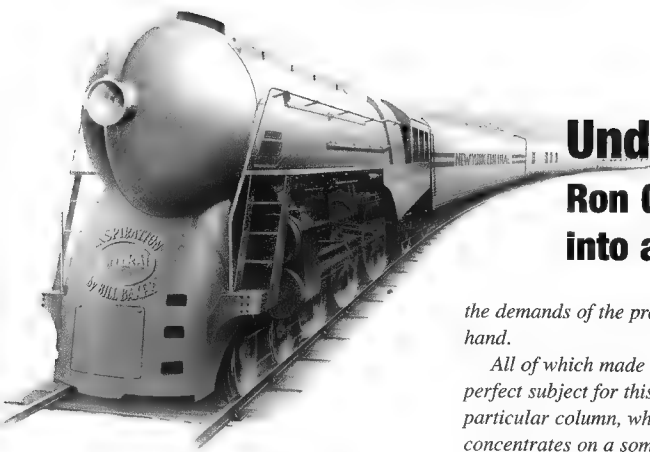
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issue of the run, so the romance story was dropped in #106. Along with the last Dr. Pat story and the final appearance of Wonder Woman in *Sensation*, this issue regrettably carried the last appearance of Astra.

In this story, Astra, looking several years older than in her debut story and with a spiffy new hairstyle, confronts and defeats "The Mad Brain." She tricks a disembodied think-tank to play an endless game, thus taking its mind, so to speak, off its plans to destroy Earth.

Ironically, two pages later on the inside back cover, is an ad for *Star Spangled Comics*, the other remaining DC anthology other than long-running Golden Age survivors *Action*, *Adventure* and *Detective*. The ad featured another highly original but short-lived DC innovation, The Ghost-Breaker, who ran in the final nine issues of *Star Spangled* (#122-130) but, unlike Astra, was cover featured throughout his brief run.

Both Astra and The Ghost-Breaker were much more entertaining concepts than many of DC's anthology features. But they appeared in the wrong titles at the wrong time—at the end of the Golden Age, when anthologies of different types of characters already had largely fallen out of favor. Timing, as they say, is everything. 🐛



Under the Influence

Ron Garney on making influences into aspects of an original style

For well over a decade, Ron Garney has plied his trade and worked his way up the food chain to the point where he's now able to lay claim to having worked on just about all of the iconic modern comics, including his current assignment penciling DC's JLA, and prior turns on Marvel's Uncanny X-Men, Captain America and The Hulk. Throughout his journey, Garney has taken it all, both the praise and complaints, with a grain of salt chased with a strong shot of his incredibly dry humor. There's not a speck of the prima donna nor hint of a "rock star" attitude to be found here, only an artist's abiding concern for clear and smooth storytelling combined with delineation that's carefully matched to



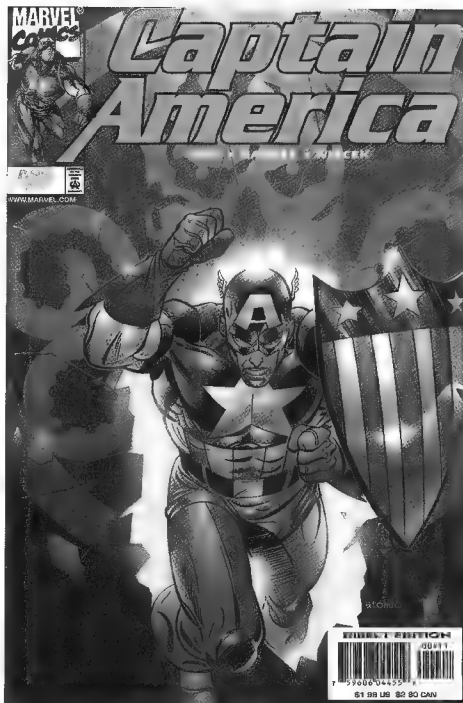
the demands of the project at hand.

All of which made Ron the perfect subject for this particular column, which concentrates on a sometimes touchy aspect of artistic influence; namely, the too-often blurred line between the act of being inspired by, and that of blatantly copying, another artist's work.

CBM: When we've spoken in the past, you've mentioned that Moebius influenced your run on *Silver Surfer*. This brings up an interesting question, which is how do you decide what you like about another artist's work, and how do you then incorporate those elements into your work, while still making it all your own?

Ron Garney: I've never been a huge advocate of ripping off somebody else's style, but I guess that's what you call it, rather than paying "homage" to it. There are two trains of thought there. I think ripping somebody off is more stealing panel-for-panel what they do. There were some guys, and I won't mention any names, who were ripping off Jim Lee's pages. They were drawing right over them, and then changing the costumes. There was a site online, "swipe of the week" I think it was called, and these guys dedicated themselves to finding all these swipes in comics. That's just...I mean, it's just wrong. They're getting paid to do [work that] somebody else has already done.

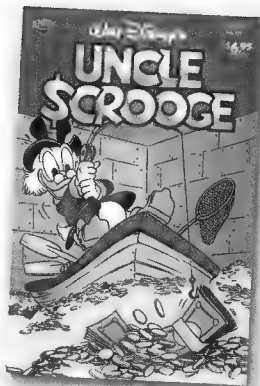
But there's a difference between that, and then paying homage, or just really being jazzed by somebody's style. There've been a lot of "Mike Mignola" guys out there. You know, guys who really tried to emulate what Mike



Mignola was doing. And I think it's because you find something in the work that you feel, or you're so drawn to, because it appeals to your particular personality, for whatever reason. I think a guy like Mike Mignola, his use of blacks is breathtaking. And if you want to gain some of that knowledge, or want some of that in your own work, it's good to try to study what he does and try to apply that to your own work. Eventually, what happens is that you may look like you're trying to clone yourself off Mike Mignola, or trying to do what he does, but what happens is it finally starts to integrate itself into your own way of thinking, and then it starts to become your own animal.

Travis Charest is probably a good example [of this process]. I keep talking a lot about other artists, but he started off

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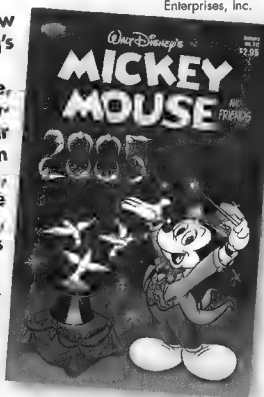
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very clearly trying to do Jim Lee imitations, and he just sort of evolved into his own thing based on all the other influences he kept grafting onto himself. And gratefully so; his stuff is beautiful.

And I think as far as Moebius is concerned, and myself, maybe it was his line weights, maybe it was something about his clean style [that hit me the most]. I think a lot of his ideas, his very creative thought process [influenced me the most]. He has this interesting way of doing some wacky, bizarre kind of image that really, if you break it down, it makes no sense. It doesn't need to; it makes sense for itself. It's hard to explain. I just found that very intriguing, and a kind of very intellectual way of creative thinking. And I just liked [the fact that] it was very clean. And I think you can see in my work that I've, probably over the years, gotten cleaner and cleaner, and I think that I'm drawn to his ability to be very clean and just use a flat color palette in a lot of his stuff.

So, for whatever reasons, that appeals to me. And I was so jazzed by what he did on [*Silver Surfer: Parable*]. He just had this way of making the Surfer float around. I mean, when you're reading it, you could tell that he really felt the Surfer floating on the board. The board felt like it was floating. In reality, if it was next to you, it would just be floating there. And if you touched it, it would seem to be some kind of field beneath that [could] make it bounce up and down in midair, and sort of stay there. You know, like if you hopped on it you could almost, just with your

thought, move it with your feet and it would go in any direction.

The way he drew the Surfer, it was very effortless. A lot of what John Buscema or Kirby had done on the Surfer, they kind of drew the Surfer [well], but it always looked like he was trying to keep his balance on the board. When Moebius drew him, it didn't look like he needed to. He could be upside down, standing on the thing, and it was just part of his body, just the way he moved. It was like he was one with the board, and I just thought that was a more.... Well, I guess if there were such creatures like the Surfer, that it would be a more realistic approach to how it would work, you know?

So I guess I was jazzed on that when I did *The [Silver] Surfer*, and I liked the way he drew Galactus. So I just tried to have fun with it. I didn't take myself too seriously, and think I was trying to be him, or anything else. It was a deliberate attempt, visually, to try to do what he was doing just for fun.

And, interestingly, I didn't intend for it to be part of my own personal artistic vision in the long run. But it ended up being [part of my arsenal] just from doing it. Just from trying to emulate that kind of style, I found myself later, even after *Surfer*, that little things were sticking with me about the way that Moebius drew things. And even today, I still draw certain faces just by habit now, because I was so jazzed by his material. If you tend to look, you see the influence there, the same way you may see Neal Adams in John Byrne's work. Although I didn't quite go that far with it, where you can say, "Oh, that's a Moebius face," with every panel. Every now and then.

CBM: Right. You seem to have really incorporated your influences and blended them well with your own artistic vision, making it your own in a real sense.

Garney: Yeah, well, it can't help but be that. If you have any kind of artistic integrity on your own, you can't help but make it your own, a little bit. It just sort of works that way by nature. And by nature, you can never be a perfect

emulation of a Moebius, or a Mignola, or whoever. You just can't be, because you're not that particular person, anyway. You can try that style until you're blue in the face, and some guys come really close to aping other guys, but you never are; you're just an imitation, I suppose.

So if you have any kind of sense of independence in your work, or individuality, or that's what you're striving for, that stuff can't help but incorporate itself [into your work] and make it its own [animal]. It may be a form of swiping, or stealing [in one sense], but it's really not. It's more about being influenced, I think, and learning from it.



CBM: Have you made a conscious decision, at certain points in your career, that you needed to do something new, art-wise, for inspiration? I ask, because it almost seems like you've done that a couple times.

Garney: [Laughter] Does it really seem like that?

CBM: Well, I've kind of gotten that idea indirectly from you.

Garney: I just don't like being a one trick pony. Maybe I just get bored easily [continued on page 69]

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By R.C. Harvey



If Jews Created Comics, Are Comics, Then, Jewish?

Hollywood studios were Jews, as convincingly explained by Neal Gabler in *An Empire of Their Own*. I submit, however, that there are other, tangential, reasons for the Jewish presence among comic book pioneers—part geographic, part demographic and part ethnic.

The pulp magazine publishing business, in which comic books were born, was located chiefly in New York; and New York, including its boroughs, had significant enclaves of Jewish population—mostly in neighborhoods that many Jews wanted to

get out of, particularly if they were young and second generation. Proximity created opportunity. By the same token, it's unlikely that Irving Berlin would have become a professional song-writer if he'd grown up in a suburb of Denver rather than on New York's lower east side.

What's more, Jewish culture probably encouraged taking advantage of the opportunity. I can't speak with the authority of first-hand experience about Jewish culture, but from what I have gleaned from over sixty years of observing the comings and goings of the human sapiens (sic), it seems to me that immigrant Jewish culture in the years we

With Joe Kubert's book, *Yossel*, about the Jewish uprising in the Warsaw ghetto in 1943—as with Art Spiegelman's *Maus* about the Holocaust and Will Eisner's *Fagin the Jew* about anti-Semitism (not to mention his watershed *A Contract with God* and his other graphic novels about Jewish life in the Bronx)—we come again, in a poetic manner of speaking, full-circle, to the Jewish presence in comics—specifically, in the creation of the comic book medium itself. A preponderance of the pace-setting persons whose names dot the landscape of the early history of comics are Jews, a fact that has recently exercised several commentators (among them Arie Kaplan, whose article on “How the Jews Created the Comic Book Industry” you'll find here in the pages of *CBM*).

A reasonable question immediately arises: Why were so many comic book creators and pioneers Jewish?

One theory is that because anti-Semitism in the early decades of the century closed so many avenues of access to the main street of American life, Jews got into comics because it was not yet an established industry. Kaplan quotes *Mad* cartoonist Al Jaffee: “We couldn't get into newspaper strips or advertising—ad agencies wouldn't hire a Jew ... [but] comic book publishers were Jewish.”

Much the same reasoning explains why so many of the founders of



Shelly Mayer self-caricature (from *Sugar & Spike* #85, reprinted in *Comic Book Artist* #11).



are considering always valued art and artists, so children with ability in art or music were encouraged to follow their talents as careers (or to find or invent careers for it) instead of being discouraged in favor of some less intellectual or aesthetic undertaking.

That encouragement might lead a kid with drawing skills into the only commercial outlet then readily open to him—namely, as Jaffee said, comic books. And we have a vivid enactment of precisely this phenomenon among the pioneers themselves: Sheldon Mayer, in both life and art, embodied the tradition.

As Max Gaines' teenage editor, he drew a comic strip for his boss's comic books called "Scribbly." It was about a wild-eyed, spectacled youth who wanted to be a professional cartoonist. Not only that, but in the world of Mayer's stories, Scribbly, like Mayer himself, was a professional cartoonist: as a mere

teenager, he was working on the local newspaper as a cartoonist. He thus personified both youthful artistic yearning and its realization in adult terms.

There are claims of overt evidences in comic books of embedded Jewish culture. "We are people of the Book," Eisner observed, implying a somewhat broader interpretation of that expression than Mohammed intended. "We are storytellers, essentially, and anyone who's exposed to Jewish culture, I think, walks away for the rest of his life with an instinct for telling stories."

Even more specifically, some critics see in Shuster and Siegel's Superman an incarnation of the golem, the legendary super-powered creature conceived by a medieval rabbi in Prague as a protector of the community against anti-Semitic enemies.

The risk in such extrapolations is that we read too deeply into the material and find evidences of influences that never explicitly existed. I suspect, for instance, that all cultures have storytelling traditions at least as lively as the Jewish tradition. If not all cultures, at least most of them. Storytelling is a human trait, not just a Jewish one.

As for the golem, much referred to in the years following Michael Chabon's use of the myth in his Pulitzer-winning novel about the early days of comic book manufacture, *The Amazing*

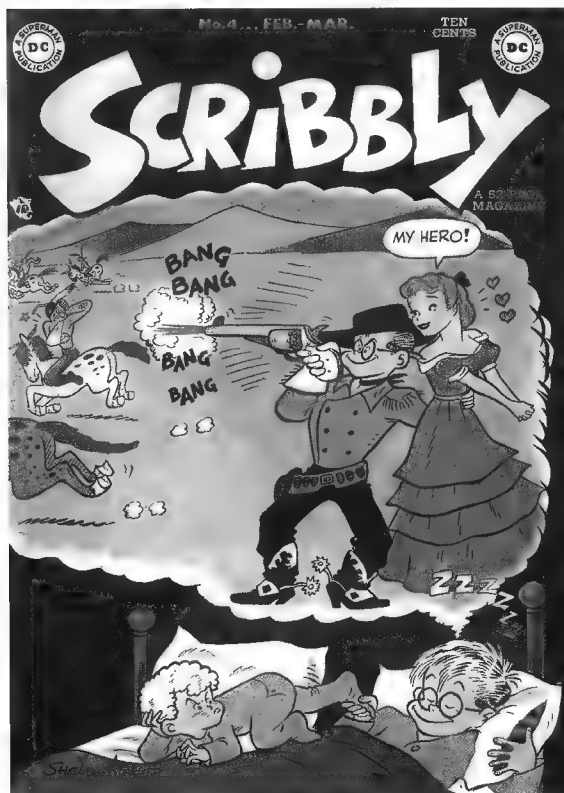
Adventures of Kavalier and Clay, I submit that the human psyche is sufficient of itself to spawn the creation of super-heroic figures without recourse to Jewish legends in antique Europe. Early comic book readers everywhere, mostly adolescents (then and in subsequent generations, the chief audience for the medium), feel enough put-upon by their parents and other authority figures to fantasize about superpowers and a heroic status that would make them immune from adult oppression.

And teenage frustrations inspire more than mere power fantasies. When Jerry Siegel concocted a dual personality for his super-powered hero, he was, again, indulging an adolescent fantasy. "As a high school student...I had crushes on several attractive girls who either didn't know I existed or didn't care I existed. [But] what if I had something special going for me, like jumping over buildings or throwing cars around or something like that? Then maybe they would notice me."

The creators of Superman scarcely needed the ancient golem for inspiration. Ordinary human nature is enough. But that doesn't stop us from speculating about Jewish presence in comics.

Chabon, commenting recently (*Newsweek*, June 28, 2004) on the guilt-ridden personality of Peter Parker/Spider-Man, said: "I don't think there's another comic book super-hero that's as completely driven by trying to pay some debt, a debt that can't be paid, as Spider-Man is. For years people have speculated that Peter was sort of crypto-Jewish," he continued, citing Peter's living with Uncle Ben and Aunt May in *Queens* (Chabon's italics).

Peter Parker's neighborhood aside, Freud might have found an explanation for Spider-Man's guilt in the universal human unconscious, particularly in



Cover of *Scribbly* #4.



Scribblly Jibbet making a posthumous appearance on the cover of **Comic Book Artist** #11.

Peter's case since he was indirectly responsible for the death of Uncle Ben, his father-figure, enacting thereby the wish of the Oedipal complex. And if killing your father won't fill you with guilt, what will? But it's not a specifically Jewish motivation any more

flattered and flustered.

"You know, I didn't intend for him to be Jewish," he laughed. "I never thought for a minute what the characters' religions were."

But the artist is often not the best witness on behalf of his art. He may not

than the Oedipus complex is Greek.

The Jewish heritage in comic books does not seem to me to be particularly distinct or obvious. Nor is it, apparently, intentional, even if it is actually there. In the summer of 2002, the current custodians of Marvel Comics revealed that the Hulk, one of the heroes invented by Jack Kirby and Stan Lee, both Jews, is Jewish.

Lee, now chairman emeritus of Marvel and no longer associated directly with the production of comic books, was tracked down by an inquisitive NPR reporter, Brooke Gladstone, who confronted him with the news. Lee sounded both

know, explicitly, what he's up to. I doubt, for example, that those early movie moguls realized how profoundly their Jewish aspirations were shaping America. According to Gabler, the America they portrayed in their films was the America they dreamed of belonging to. But it was not the actual America. It was, however, so compelling a portrait, so vivid an impersonation, that all movie-goers, all Americans, bought into it, and it became "the American Dream" for us all, not just first generation Jews seeking to assimilate.

"What the Hollywood Jews left us," Gabler writes, "is something powerful and mysterious. What remains is a spell, a landscape of the mind, a constellation of values, attitudes, and images, a history and a mythology that is part of our culture and our consciousness. What remains is the America of our imaginations and theirs. Out of their desperation and their dreams, they gave us this America."

Comics can scarcely aspire to an influence similarly rooted in Jewish culture, but perhaps no one is suggesting that. Perhaps the influence of Jewish culture on comics and of comics on the

American psyche is much less profound, much less pervasive, than that of the Hollywood Jews.

Maybe without realizing it, Lee and Kirby reproduced in the squabbling Fantastic Four some long forgotten but internalized reminiscence of a radio program about a Jewish family that they must have heard while young: just as with Molly Goldberg and her brood, the familial bickering among the Fantastic Four was endemic and heated but the affection and regard that bound the



Scribblly Comics: Scribblly, boy cartoonist in an adult world.

participants together was the dominant fact of the relationship.

Was that the influence of Jewish culture? Or simply of eastern European immigrant culture? Or neither? Regardless, the most fondly recalled of the haunting influences of Jewish culture that can be detected in comic books remains, for me, Scribbly's world, one in which the artistic aspirations of the young are given so much credence as to result in their being accepted, without quibble, into the professional world of adults. Moreover, in Scribbly we may have the emblem for the very development and maturation of the art form of the comics.

In the ensuing years, the Jewish influence became obvious. As Kaplan explains, Chris Claremont, a Jewish immigrant from England, revitalized

precisely because they are different.

At their conception in 1963, they could have represented Jews as "outsiders" although it's my guess that they were more in step with another kind of persecution prevalent at the time: the civil rights movement was gaining momentum in those days, and the X-Men's "difference" could have been a metaphor for racial difference. And let us not forget the classical teenage psychodrama with teenagers perpetually the "outsiders," the perennially persecuted (by their parents and all authority figures).

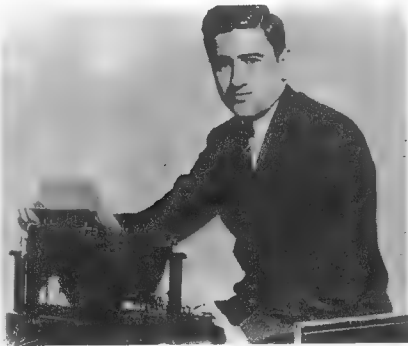
Then came Claremont. When he took up the writing task, he needed, as a writer, to find motivation for his characters and their stories. He remembered asking himself: "What would tie in the super-concept of the X-Men as persecuted outcasts?" His answer: "It has to be the Holocaust."

For Claremont, the emotional touchstone, the source of his creative energy, was the 20th century history of the European Jew. He even introduced a Jewish character, Kitty Pryde, whose appearance and, to some extent, demeanor were inspired by a girl Claremont had seen during the time he'd spent on a kibbutz in Israel.

As the years had ticked by, the need felt by most first- and second-generation Jews to assimilate into the prevailing culture began to wane in their children. It was no longer as important as it once seemed to

deny, figuratively—even actually—one's Jewish heritage in order to be accepted (or to avoid persecution).

By the time Howard Chaykin created
[continued on page 80]

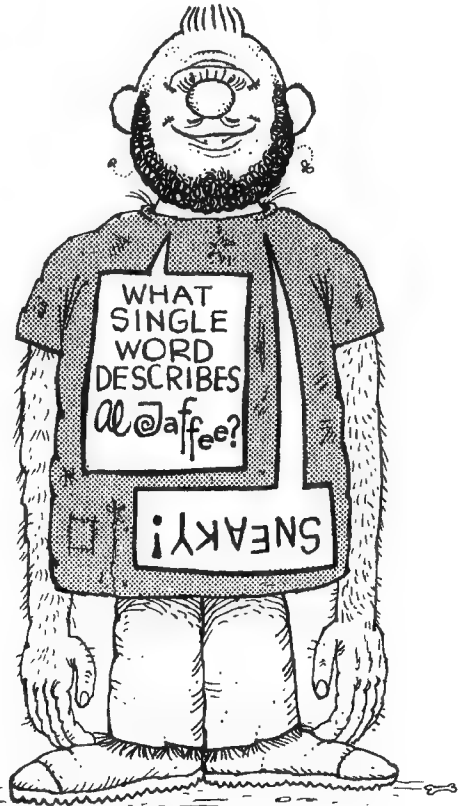


Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster.



Marvel's X-Men in the mid-1970s and made the connection explicit.

The X-Men are super-heroes because they were born with a "mutant gene" that gave them each different superpowers. They are "mutants," different from other human beings, and they are persecuted



Al Jaffee, self-caricature (from *A Gallery of Rogues: Cartoonists' Self-Caricatures*).

by Pat Calhoun

The Comic Book's Godfather

Weird Tales for August 1934 featured one of Margaret Brundage's best Conan covers and was on the stands at the same time as *Famous Funnies* #1 (Jul 1934), the first issue of the first monthly comic book title in (what would become) the standard format of 64 color pages for ten cents. At that time the pulps were a fully developed medium, and the Conan era of *Weird Tales* was one of the richest harvests, not just for great fiction, but for that ambience that produced not just readers but fans, a word we all know but sometimes forget is short for fanatics.

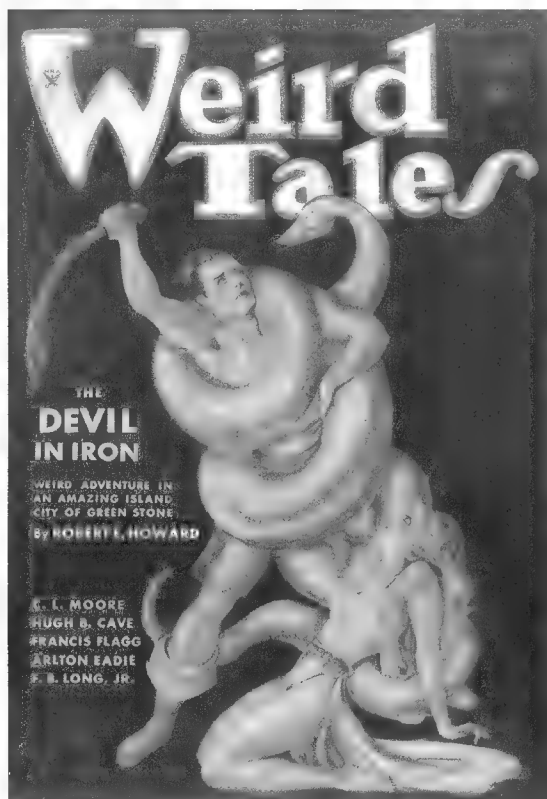
In short the "sense of wonder" that the SF and hero pulps had so finely tuned would provide the comic books—already progressed from "shrunk Sunday strip reprints" to original material by 1935—with whole conceptual and packaging templates that would springboard into the Golden Age. Readers who haven't are advised to get and read Jim Steranko's superb *History of Comics*—the first volume explores the pulps' seminal influences upon the young four-color field. And although primeval barbarians did not dominate the early comics, Conan clones would have their day, as we'll see shortly.

The year 1937 was a key year in the early comics game, with one of the first and the most enduring "theme" titles, *Detective Comics*, from National Publications, premiering with #1 dated March 1937. Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster's 13-page Slam Bradley showed

a command of the possibilities this new format offered and a complete assimilation of pulp and "pop" culture influences. Much of Slam's character would later manifest itself in Superman—the faster than a speeding bullet success story that ensured comics' future. Jerry and Joe were huge science fiction fans and no doubt read avidly E.E. Smith's *Galactic Patrol*, serialized in *Astounding* from September 1937 through February 1938, which introduced Kimball Kinnison and the Lensmen. Smith developed a slew of SF staples—the powerful and friendly aliens who help Earth battle for a rightful place in the universe—the super-powered agents who act for the aliens, having these agents wear a device that channels these powers, and having these agents from different races from different planets working together. The Lens saga peaked in the next book, *Gray Lensman*, serialized in *Astounding* starting in October 1939, with a memorable Kimball Kinnison cover by Hubert Rogers.

Not only was *Gray Lensman* a direct inspiration for the Golden Age Green Lantern (one wears a power bracelet, the other a power ring, and they have similarly-

constructed color-based names—GL and GL), but the Silver Age GL even incorporated the "Guardians of the Universe" concepts. Hey, we all know what those DC guys (bless you, Julie) grew up reading! SF writer and key 1950s/1960s Superman scribe Edmond Hamilton had expanded some of Doc Smith's ideas with his *Interstellar Patrol* series published in *Weird Tales* starting back in 1928! So in addition to all the concepts the pulps also produced many of the early and Golden Age comics



Weird Tales (Aug 1934) In addition to one of the 17 original Conan stories this issue features a Northwest Smith space adventure, "Dust of Gods," by C. L. Moore, as well as classics by Francis Flagg and Mary Elizabeth Counselman—whew!

House Hunting Is Always Hard



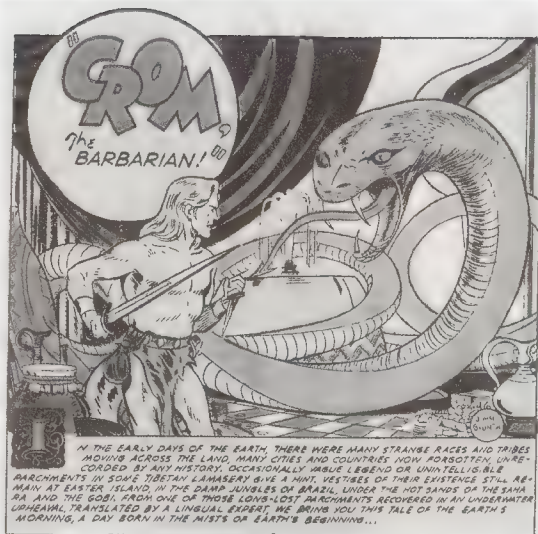
Letting your poor cookies live in the drab depressing hovel of the plastic bag? Let Scoop - the free e-newsletter - help you locate all the latest models of cookie jars! It can provide a needed home for your wayward gingerbread cookies. Whether your pleasure is *I Dream of Jeannie* or *Batman*, *Lone Ranger* or *Felix the Cat*, soon your cookies will be dancing the Macaroona in their very own cookie

jar collectible. Plus, Scoop gives you the inside tour on many other pop culture collectibles - from salt and pepper shakers to standees. Now you're stylin'!



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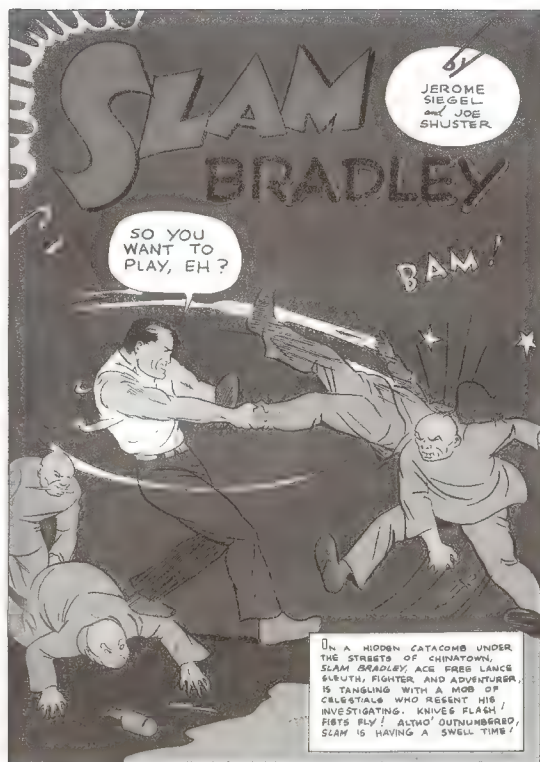
<http://scoop.diamondgalleries.com>



Crom the Barbarian from **Out of This World** #1 (1950) Gardner Fox not only chose a character name from Conan's world, he also followed Howard's fetish for giant snakes. If Avon had done more to promote it, this excellent series "could have been a contender."

creators and editors and publishers, not to mention the all-important audience! In effect pulps were not only comics godfather but godmother and great aunt as well!

It's fun to look at Robert Fuqua's cover for *Amazing Stories* (Jan 1939) and realize that Adam Link would follow up his early Ziff-Davis appearances with a series of adaptations by EC Comics in the early 1950s and another in the late 1960s for Warren's *Creepy* and *Eerie*, again drawn by Joe Orlando, with



Slam Bradley from **Detective** #1 (Mar 1937) It makes sense that super pulp fan Jerry Siegel would write the best comic scripts yet seen in the new format. Note Joe Shuster's attention to titling and signature details—they're warming up for Superman!

script chores performed by the original author, Eando (Otto) Binder. After writing a bunch more SF, Otto went on to pen many of the finest moments in the Captain Marvel saga, and then work for DC in the 1950s on Superman and SF titles.

Of course another reason so many pulpsters found the way into comics in the 1950s is that by then the rough-edged fiction factories were fading, losing market to paperbacks, comics themselves, and that nemesis of them all (us all?) television.

Gardner Fox went from writing for pulps and comics to writing for paperbacks and comics; while creating the Justice League of America he was also turning out novels like *Rebel Wench* and *Creole Woman*. His late-1940s/early-1950s novels for *Planet Stories*, such as "The Warlock of Sharrador" (Mar 1953), worked the interplanetary subset of sword and sorcery (as did Ed Hamilton's wife Leigh Brackett), but for Avon Comics in 1950 he went pure S-&S with his "Crom the Barbarian" strip that debuted in the *Out of This World* one-shot, [continued on page 69]

"The Trial of Adam Link" from **Creepy** #4 (1965) Joe Orlando drew both of the comic series adapting the Adam Link tales, evolving the character into a more-human look to better reflect the intense emotions in the metal marvel.

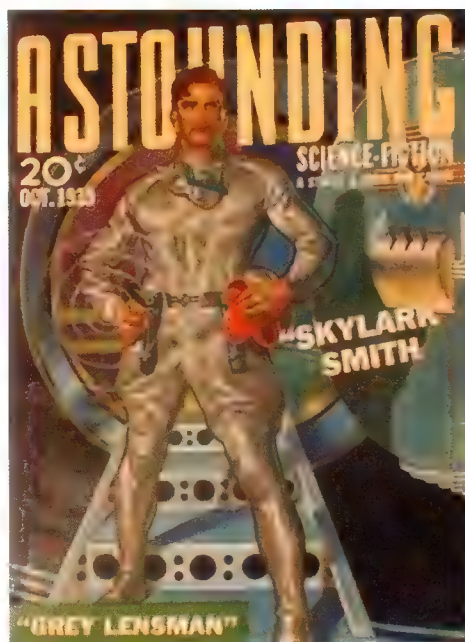


Planet Stories (Mar 1953) In an economic sense, the overlap of the pulp and comics markets enabled prolific souls like Gardner Fox to work both fields—helping creators keep a steady income through the ups and downs of either market.

Amazing (Jan 1939)

Here is the first cover and story of a popular robot series that would enjoy two comic book revivals.

Another favorite robot writer, Isaac Asimov, would have his first story published in the March issue of this same magazine.



Astounding (Oct 1939) The packaging for this space opera epiphany shines despite the silly mistake of spelling the title wrong—which no doubt turned writer E.E. Smith and editor John W. Campbell green!

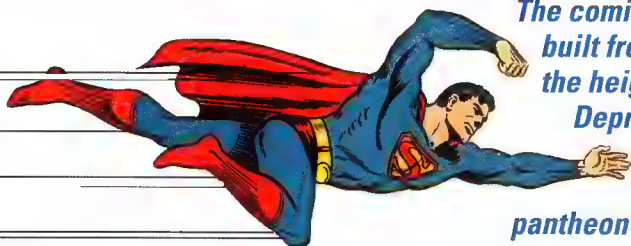
Showcase #22 (Oct 1959) Exactly 20 years after Gray Lensman, the Silver Age Green Lantern debuted, and though

Smith's saga obviously inspired the Golden Age GL as well, the Silver Age version used even more of the Lens myths.



How THE **JEW**S CREATED THE COMIC BOOK **INDUSTRY**

PART I: THE GOLDEN AGE (1933-1955)



The comic book industry was built from the ground up at the height of the Great Depression by enterprising American Jews who fashioned a pantheon of the world's most famous superheroes.

by Arie Kaplan

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1933. FDR was inaugurated, Hitler became chancellor of Germany, television was patented, and an unemployed Jewish novelty salesman named Max Gaines (nee Max Ginzberg) was pondering how on earth he would be able to feed his wife Jessie and their two young children, who were living with him at his mother's house in the Bronx. To lift his spirits, he began reading some Sunday funnies stored in his mother's attic.

Suddenly the idea hit him: if he enjoyed reading old comic strips like *Joe Palooka*, *Mutt and Jeff*, and *Hairbreadth Harry*, maybe the rest of America would, too!

Gaines shared his brainstorm with his good friend Harry L. Wildenberg, who worked at Eastern Color Printing. For years, Eastern had been toying with the idea of reprinting Sunday comic strips as tabloid-size giveaways. Gaines proposed a different approach—reducing the comic-strip reprints to half tabloid-size and selling them. Persuaded to take a chance on the concept, in February 1934 Eastern published *Famous Funnies* #1, Series 1, the first American comic book to be sold to the public. The 35 thousand copies shipped to

department stores throughout the country quickly disappeared from the shelves. ECP followed in May with *Famous Funnies* #1, Series 2, the first monthly comic book to be sold on newsstands. Issue #8 turned a profit (earning \$2,664.25), and an industry was born. By 1941 thirty comic-book publishers were producing 150 different titles monthly, with combined sales of 15 million copies and a youth readership of 60 million, making the emerging comic-book industry one of the few commercial bright spots of the Great Depression.

Things were not going as well for Max Gaines. Though he



Four-Color Forebears

"My father conceived the idea of taking the Sunday pages, folding them over, and folding them once again, and ending up with something roughly the size of today's comic book."

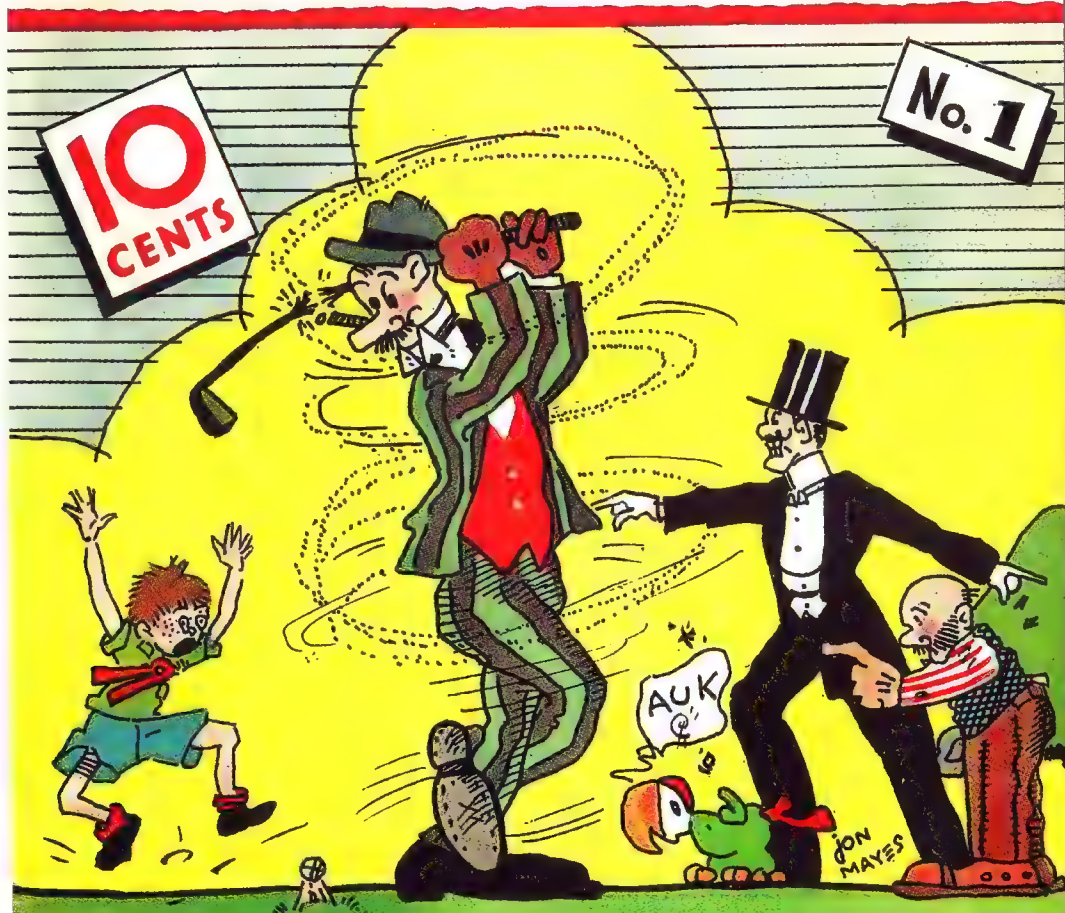
—William M. Gaines

Max Gaines



FAMOUS FUNNIES

100 COMICS AND GAMES-PUZZLES-MAGIC



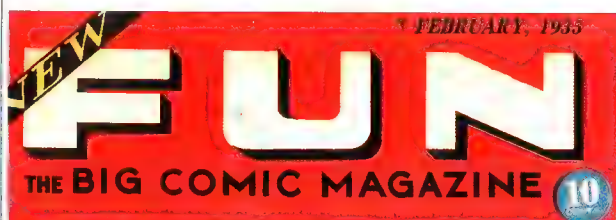
Toonerville Folks • Mutt & Jeff • Hairbreadth Harry • S'matter Pop • Nipper
Dixie Duggan • The Bungle Family • Connie • Ben Webster • Tailspin Tommy
Pam • The Nebbs • Highlights of History • Amaze-a-Minute • Screen Oddities

cial bright spots of the Great Depression.

Things were not going as well for Max Gaines. Though he had helped to reverse ECP's fortunes, one day late in 1934, for reasons unknown, he was unceremoniously sacked. But hearing that the McClure Newspaper Syndicate had a pair of idle two-color presses, the ever-resourceful innovator struck a deal: if McClure would let him use its presses to print a new comic-book title, he'd split the proceeds 50-50. McClure agreed, and *Popular Comics* was born. Like *Famous Funnies*, *Popular Comics* material consisted of reprinted color newspaper strips—old favorites like *Dick Tracy*, *Little Orphan Annie* and *Gasoline Alley*—but Gaines made sure his reprints were



In *New Fun Comics* #6 (DC, 1935) Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster introduced Dr. Occult, the supernatural "ghost detective" who wore a red cloak, strikingly similar to Superman who the two Cleveland residents had tried, but were unable to publish. BELOW: Siegel and Shuster's hard-nosed detective Slam Bradley made his debut in *Detective Comics* #1 (DC, 1937) to this day he is still a part of DC Comics' continuity.



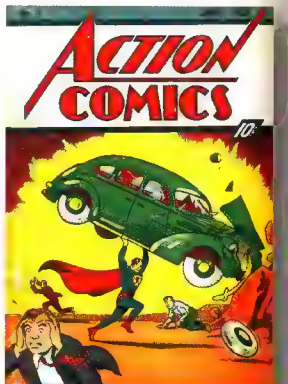
NEW COMIC STRIPS • AIRCRAFT • RADIO • MOVIES
STORIES • ADVENTURE • MYSTERY • SPORTS • PRIZES

New Fun Comics #1 (DC, 1935) DC Comics' first title.

brighter. Thanks to its vivid colors and the inclusion of *Scnbbly*—a token original strip about a boy cartoonist, modeled on its Jewish creator Sheldon Mayer—*Popular Comics* outshone the competition, but the heyday of reprint comics was fast coming to a close.

Anticipating that the novelty, and thus the appeal, of recycled newspaper comics would be short-lived, Gaines was ever on the lookout for something new, and he wasn't alone. Major Malcolm Wheeler-Nicholson, the publisher of National Allied Publications (soon to be known as National Periodicals, then Detective Comics Inc., then DC Comics), had already begun scouting for original strips with new characters and new ideas, which, not insignificantly, would also reduce his reprint royalty payments to newspaper syndicates.

DC's first title, *New Fun Comics*, appeared in February 1935. Imitating Sunday humor and adventure comics, the new title was by all accounts mediocre—that is, until the appearance in *New Fun* #6 (October 1935) of Doctor Occult, the brash supernatural "ghost detective" who battled vampires, ghosts, and sorcerers. The brainchild of two prolific, innovative Jews from Cleveland, Jerry Siegel (writer) and Joe Shuster (artist), Doctor Occult captured the imagination of young readers with his supernatural exploits. Then, for three issues (starting with issue #14 in October 1936 of what was now *More*



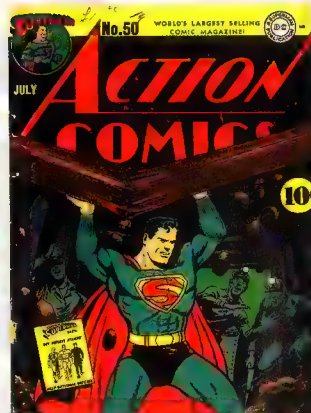
The debut of Superman, *Action Comics* #1 (DC, 1938).



The Golem and Superman

"The Golem was very much the precursor of the super-hero in that in every society there's a need for mythological characters, wish fulfillment. And the wish fulfillment in the Jewish case of the hero would be someone who could protect us. This kind of storytelling seems to dominate in Jewish culture."

—Will Eisner



Fun Comics), Siegel and Shuster dressed their usually trench coat-and-fedora-clad Doctor Occult in blue tights and a red cape, endowing him with temporary superpowers, such as super strength and flight. They were trying out ideas they'd developed for another character which, for the past three years, they'd unsuccessfully shopped around to various newspaper syndicates and comic-book companies. That character was *Superman*.

In 1937 McClure employee Sheldon Mayer told his boss Max Gaines about this caped, muscled *Superman* in red-and-blue tights who could lift an automobile above his head, causing criminals to scatter like frightened rats. The strip had been rejected by every New York newspaper as being too fantastic even for juvenile audiences, but Mayer assured Gaines (now DC Comics' print broker) that this "Man of Tomorrow" would be "the next big thing" in comic books. Gaines agreed, and within days he, Mayer, Siegel and

Shuster were hastily cutting and pasting *Superman* strips into comic-book format. Gaines then sent the boards on to his friend Harry Donenfeld, who with Jack Liebowitz had recently become publishers of DC Comics,

taking over the company from the financially strapped Wheeler-Nicholson. Donenfeld was skeptical, yet he placed great stock in Gaines' impeccable marketing instincts. And

then there was Siegel and Shuster's impressive track record—not only had they created Doctor Occult, but the even more successful brawling private-eye

Slam Bradley. Donenfeld decided to take the risk. In June 1938 he published the first *Superman* strip as the flagship feature of his new imprint *Action Comics*. Sure enough, *Superman* took off like a rocket—or a bird, a plane...

Conceived by Siegel and Shuster while they

were still in high school, *Superman* became the first comic-book character to cross over to virtually every medium—novels (George Lowther's *The Adventures of Superman*, illustrated by Joe Shuster and published in 1942, featured the first comic-book hero to appear in a



George Lowther's *The Adventures of Superman*, illustrated by Joe Shuster and published in 1942, featured the first comic-book hero to appear in a novel.



Boys and Girls: Meet the creators of the one and only **SUPERMAN**—America's Greatest Adventure Strip!



Here is Jerry Siegel at his typewriter, thinking up his next thrilling adventure of **SUPERMAN**, which will be shown in the July issue of **ACTION COMICS**. Jerry is 24 years of age, a native of Cleveland, Ohio. Jerry has written many books and stories which have appeared in a great many magazines, but he likes **SUPERMAN** best of all, because he really believes in the principles which prompt **SUPERMAN'S** startling accomplishments in behalf of law and justice!

This is Joe Shuster, Jerry's life-long friend and associate, from whose versatile pen and brush are depicted **SUPERMAN'S** amazing feats. Here he is at his drawing board, about to start the new **SUPERMAN** episode which will be seen in July **ACTION COMICS**! Joe, too, is a native and resident of Cleveland and has contributed to many publications. Joe says, "I hope the boys and girls of America enjoy reading **SUPERMAN**, as much as Jerry and I enjoy writing and drawing it."



JERRY SIEGEL and JOE SHUSTER are also the creators of "Slam Bradley" and "Spy" which appear in DETECTIVE COMICS; "Radio Squad" which appears in MORE FUN COMICS; and "Federal Men" which appears monthly in ADVENTURE COMICS.

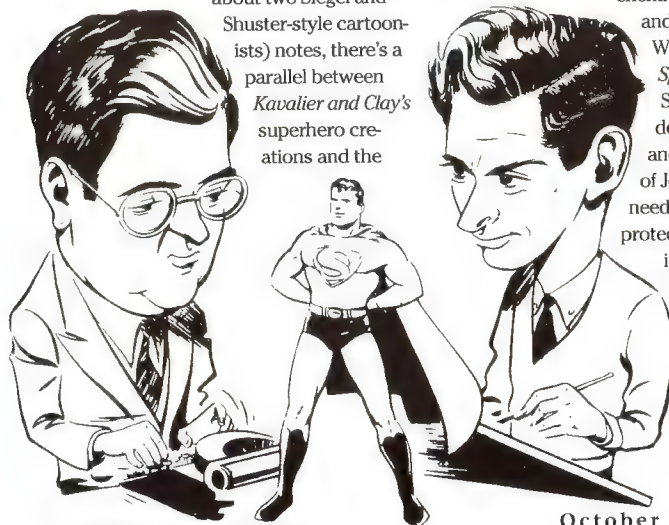
novel), radio plays, television programs (including the current WB hit drama *Smallville*, a postmodern look at Superman's early life in quintessential small-town America), theater (Harold Prince's 1966 Broadway musical *It's a Bird, It's a Plane, It's Superman*), feature films, movie serials, animated short subjects, newspaper comic strips,

Internet comics, even popular music (in the rapper Eminem's 2002 song entitled "Superman," he compares himself to the Man of Steel).

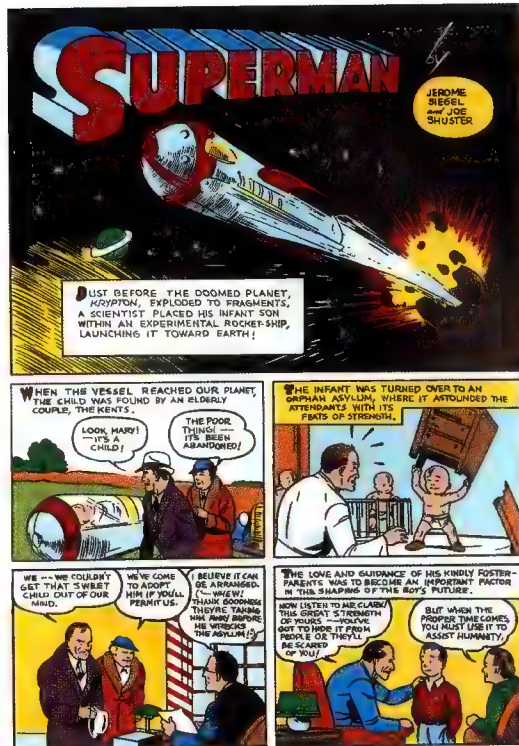
The idea of Superman occurred to Jerry Siegel one hot summer night in 1933. The teenager had trouble falling asleep. While lying in bed, he thought, "if only I could fly..." and began to envision a character who could fly—a character who was stronger, more courageous, more invincible than he could ever be. Excited, Jerry hurried to his desk and wrote out in comic strip form the first Superman story; then early the next morning he rushed over to the home of his artist friend Joe Shuster to share his idea. Equally inspired, Joe immediately began to draw a prototype of the character. Thus was a hero born.

Superman actualized the adolescent power fantasies of its creators—two Jewish Depression kids craving a muscle-bound redeemer to liberate them from the social and economic impoverishment of their lives. And, as Michael Chabon (author of the Pulitzer Prize-winning novel *The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier and Clay*, about two Siegel and

Shuster-style cartoonists) notes, there's a parallel between *Kavalier and Clay*'s superhero creations and the



Joe Shuster's caricature of himself, Jerry Siegel and their famous creation.



From Superman's origin, a child survivor named Kal-El (in Hebrew, "All that is God") from the planet Krypton, whose population, a race of brilliant scientists, is decimated. His parents send him to Earth in a tiny rocket ship, reminiscent of how baby Moses survived Pharaoh's decree to kill all Jewish newborn sons.

Golem—the legendary creature magically conceived by the rabbi of medieval Prague to defend the community from an invasion by its anti-Semitic enemies. Cartoonist, writer

and comic-book historian Will Eisner (creator of *The Spirit*) also views Superman as a mythic descendant of the Golem and thus a link in the chain of Jewish tradition. "[Jews needed] a hero who could protect us against an almost invincible force," Eisner says. "So [Siegel and Shuster] created an invincible hero."

The Superman narrative is also rich in Jewish symbolism. He is a child survivor



Action Comics #19 (DC, 1939).



No.52

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© DC COMICS

Action Comics #52 (DC, 1942) Featuring Superman and his back-ups Americommando (Tex Thompson), Vigilante, Zatara, and Congo Bill, cover art by Fred Ray.



The debut of the World's Mightiest Mortal Captain Marvel, *Whiz Comics* #1 (Fawcett, 1940), art by C.C. Beck.

named Kal-El (in Hebrew, "All that is God") from the planet Krypton, whose population, a race of brilliant scientists, is decimated. His parents send him to Earth in a tiny rocket ship,

reminiscent of how baby Moses survived Pharaoh's decree to kill all Jewish newborn sons. In the context of the 1930s, the story also reflects the saga of the Kindertransports—the evacuation to safety of hundreds of Jewish children, without their parents, from Austria, Germany, Poland and Czechoslovakia to Great Britain.

Angst-ridden adolescent fans, Jewish and not, shared

First appearance of The Flash in *Flash Comics* #1 (DC 1940) cover art by Sheldon Moldoff.



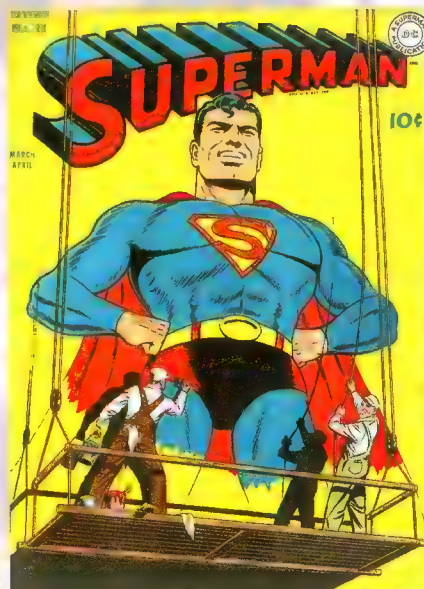
Siegel and Shuster's feelings of helplessness and yearned for a super-savior—a fact that was not lost on the comic-book publishers, who responded with a succession of new super-hero creations, among them Wonder Man (created in May 1939 by Will Eisner) and Captain Marvel (created in February 1940 by writer Bill Parker and artist C. C. Beck). In the pre-Superman era, brash, hard-boiled detectives (Ace King, Detective Dan, the aforementioned Slam Bradley) and humorous slapstick features (Curly and the Kids, Sheldon Mayer's *Scribbly*) had dominated the genre. After Superman, notes former Marvel Comics publisher and Spider Man co-creator Stan Lee (Stanley Martin Lieber), "if artists wanted to be successful, they thought, 'I guess we better give our characters costumes and double identities.'" Thus, for example, Batman secretly doubled as rich playboy Bruce Wayne, The Flash as police scientist Jay Garrick, The Ray as reporter Happy Terrill, Wonder Woman as U.S. army major Diana Prince, and Captain America as police officer Steve Rogers.

In 1939, in the wake of the tremendous success of Siegel

Instinct for Storytelling

"I am a fan of anybody who can make a living in his underwear."

—David Mamet, reflecting on Superman





Hawkman, aka millionaire antiques collector (and reincarnated Egyptian prince) Carter Hall.

and Shuster's Superman, Max Gaines joined forces with Harry Donenfeld and Jack Liebowitz in a new publishing venture called All-American Comics (the AA Group). The new group would expand the DC universe of characters with titles such as *Flash Comics* and *All-American Comics*—featuring, among others, the adventures of Hawkman, aka millionaire antiques collector (and reincarnated Egyptian prince) Carter Hall; and Green Lantern, secretly radio announcer Alan Scott (aided by a magic ring).

Other comic-book companies, like Timely Comics, Archie Comics, Fawcett Comics and Quality Comics, were now competing with the AA Group, hiring a great many Jewish artists, writers and



editors to create the next big superhero hit.

Publishers who could not afford in-house staffs contracted with the Eisner-Iger Studio, founded in 1937 by Will Eisner and Jerry Iger, which “packaged” comics—in other words, maintained a crew of artists who would write, draw, letter, color, edit and design comic-book stories. In so doing, Eisner and Iger helped launch the careers of future X-Men and Fantastic Four co-creator Jack Kirby (Jacob Kurtzberg), Batman co-creator Bob Kane (Bob Kahn), and Al Jaffee and Dave Berg of *MAD* magazine fame.

Jewish illustrators and writers entered the comic-book field because other areas of commercial illustration were virtually closed to them.

“We couldn’t get into newspaper strips or advertising; ad agencies wouldn’t hire a Jew,” explains Al Jaffee. “One of the reasons we Jews drifted into the comic-book business is that most of the comic-book publishers were Jewish. So there was no discrimination there.”

“Also,” adds Will Eisner, “this business was brand new. It was the

bottom of the social ladder, and it was wide open to anybody.

Consequently, the Jewish boys who were trying to get into the field of illustration found it very easy to come aboard.” For

talented Jewish kids who had no gift for athletics (like, say, heavyweight boxer Max Baer), music (like Benny Goodman), or acting (like John Garfield and the Marx Brothers), creating comic books appeared to be a way out of poverty and into a legitimate, hopefully lucrative, artistic career. For the same reason, the field was also wide open for comics publishers—most of them marketing maven



First appearance of Green Lantern, *All-American Comics* #16 (DC, 1940) art by Sheldon Moldoff.



Comics’ first superhero group the Justice Society of America, *All Star Comics* #2 (DC, 1940).



No. 54



MORE

The SPECTRE

FUN

APRIL

10¢

COMICS



BERNARD
BAILY

© DC COMICS

Jerry Siegel's occult superhero The Spectre from *More Fun Comics* #54 (DC, 1940), art by Bernard Baily.

Left to right: Joe Shuster, Neal Adams, Jerry Siegel and Jerry Robinson shortly after their victory in their fight for residuals from DC Comics for their character, Superman.



The Golden Age?

"I have no idea when the Golden Age was [supposed to have been], but as far as I'm concerned, whenever I am is the Golden Age!"

—Stan Lee



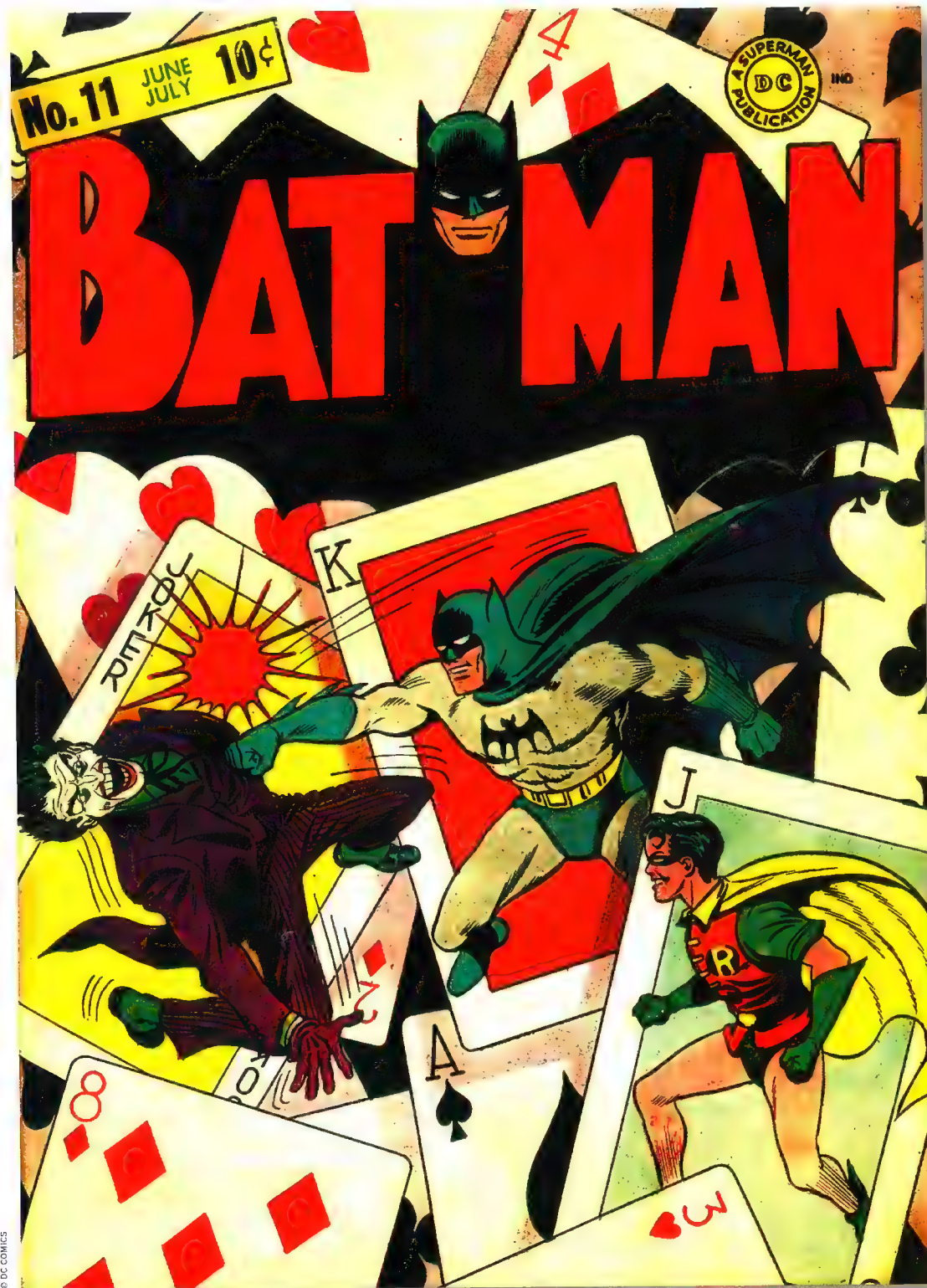
their pockets. And it was a perfect fit, given the centrality of storytelling in Jewish culture. "We are people of the Book; we are storytellers essentially," says Eisner, "and anyone who's exposed to Jewish culture, I think, walks away for the rest of his life with an instinct for telling stories."

The period roughly from 1933 to 1955 is regarded by comics historians as the "Golden Age" because it was the "first wave" of new talent, an era when classic comic-book characters such as Superman, Batman and Captain America were created, as was the graphic language of contemporary comics. "Today you call it the Golden Age," laughs Eisner. "Well, for those of us that were in the Golden Age, we didn't know it. It was the Leaden Age as far as we were concerned!" Indeed, most of the comic-

book artists and writers of this era never emerged from poverty. They were underpaid wage slaves with no rights or royalties; the characters they created were owned and trademarked by the comic-book publishers. Even Siegel and Shuster, creators of the world's first comic-book superhero, were bilked, earning a paltry \$130 from Harry Donenfeld for the first thirteen-page Superman story and having to negotiate for meager financial and creative participation in subsequent Superman strips and spin-offs (all Superman licensing fees were paid to Donenfeld's corporation, "Superman, Inc.").

The turning point for Superman's creators came in 1978—exactly forty years after Superman's first release. During a TV talk-show promotion of the first *Superman* movie, an elderly gentleman rose from the audience and said in a soft voice: "My name is Jerry Siegel. I co-created the character Superman on which they're making this movie, and I work at a supermarket bagging groceries." The studio audience gasped. So did Jerry Robinson (a cartoonist, comic-book historian, and at that time the head of the National Cartoonists Society), who was watching the show from home.

Robinson decided to launch a campaign aimed at Warner Brothers, which, as the parent company of DC Comics, owned the Superman copyright. He wanted the media giant to compensate Siegel and Shuster for having created one of the most widely recognized characters on earth. It would take many players, hundreds of arts organizations, and considerable legal maneuvering before the studio bowed to the pressure. The inventors of Superman received a "created by" credit in the movie, and an annual stipend which continued for the rest of their lives. Today, when a movie or



© DC COMICS

Batman and Robin do battle with Jerry Robinson's creation The Joker from the cover of *Batman* #12 (DC, 1942), art by Fred Ray.

Batman & The Joker

"Bill Finger co-created the character of Batman. He was there from day one!"

—Jerry Robinson



BILL FINGER'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE BATMAN'S COSTUME

TV series (not to mention comic book) is released featuring Superman, it bears the credit line: "Created by Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster," ensuring that future generations will know the genesis of the Man of Steel.

In 1939 comic-book artist Bob Kane bid farewell to his short-lived stint at the Eisner-Iger Studio to create adventure features for DC Comics. DC wanted a follow-up character to their golden boy, Superman, and Harry Donenfeld offered Kane eight instead of five dollars a page. Recalls Eisner: "I said to Bob, 'You can't do adventure, you can't draw that well!' And Bob said, 'No, I can do it, and I got a guy

First appearance of The Batman
Detective Comics #27 (DC, 1939).

who can write it! That guy was Bill Finger, a Jew from Denver, Colorado."

Kane and Finger got together and brainstormed the new character DC wanted. Kane suggested a pair of bat-style wings, which he'd doodled in sketchbooks for years. Finger proposed the wings be turned into a more practical, yet uniquely scalloped cape, then added a triangular motif to the costume, including triangular "fins" protruding from Batman's gloves, and pointy bat ears. In formulating the basic story line, the two drew upon favorite films (such as *The Bat Whispers*, in which a detective prowls the night as a killer wearing an ungainly bat-mask); novels (such as Johnston McCulley's *All-Story Weekly*, in which the rich playboy Zorro becomes an avenger by night, and the various books featuring Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes, who utilized deductive reasoning to solve crimes); and radio programs (such as *The Shadow*, in which wealthy playboy Lamont Cranston used his mastery of disguise to strike fear in the hearts of criminals). It was Finger who invented the "Dark Knight's" origin story (in which a young Bruce Wayne's parents are killed by a criminal, leaving the child obsessed with fighting crime), and the menacing urban setting of Gotham City. "[Finger] was the best writer in comic books," asserts former Batman ghost artist Jerry Robinson (creator of the newspaper strip *Life With Robinson*). Yet despite Batman's success—second only to Superman in DC's rapidly expanding superhero pantheon—Finger died impoverished, never recognized for his role in creating Batman. "Bob Kane



Bob Kane



Bill Finger

Three of Finger and Kane's most important influences in creating Batman: Zorro, Sherlock Holmes, and *The Shadow*.



The LEGEND of the

BATMAN

by BOB KANE

— WHO HE IS
AND HOW HE
CAME TO BE!

ONE NIGHT SOME FIFTEEN
YEARS AGO, THOMAS WAYNE,
HIS WIFE AND HIS SON WERE
WALKING HOME FROM A MOVIE...

W. WHAT
IS THIS?

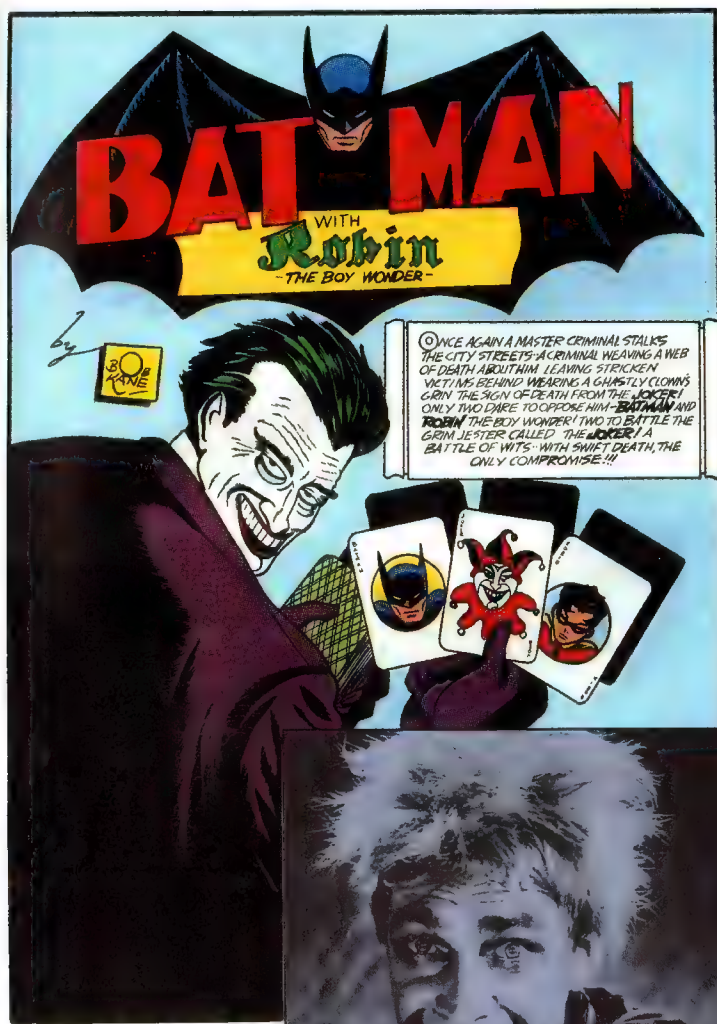
A STICKUP BUDDY!
I'LL TAKE THAT NECK
LACE YOU'RE
WEARIN' LADY!

LEAVE HER
ALONE, YOU!
OH.....

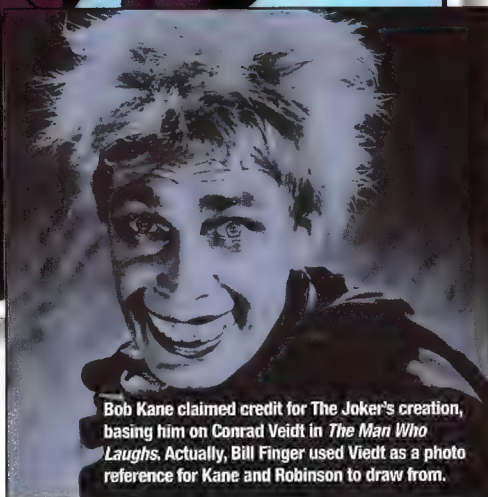
YOU
ASKED
FOR IT!

THOMAS! YOU'VE
KILLED HIM. HELP!
POLICE... HELP!

THIS'LL SHUT
YOU UP!



The splash page and first appearance of The Joker from *Batman* #1 (DC, 1940). A young Jerry Robinson created The Joker after looking at a deck of cards.



Bob Kane claimed credit for The Joker's creation, basing him on Conrad Veidt in *The Man Who Laughs*. Actually, Bill Finger used Veidt as a photo reference for Kane and Robinson to draw from.

had made a deal with DC that he [Kane] would write and draw Batman," Robinson explains, "so he kept Bill's involvement quiet." In addition, Kane made extensive use of uncredited "assistants," or ghost artists, such as Robinson, Sheldon Moldoff and Dick Sprang, all of whom were Jewish and would sign Bob Kane's name to their work. "I think I signed Bob Kane's name more than he did," Robinson notes.

Robinson also takes credit for having created, in 1940, the most famous super-villain in comic-book history—the clown prince of crime known as the Joker—for which Kane took

brought it in and showed it to Bob Kane and Bill Finger. And the first design for the Joker that I drew looks just like the one in the deck of cards in my bedroom."

With America's entry into World War II, Superman, Batman and other comic-book superheroes were pressed into action. "As



Detective Comics #71 (DC, 1943), art by Jerry Robinson.

official credit. "Kane stated for years that he created the Joker and that he based him on the Conrad Veidt film *The Man Who Laughs*," Robinson says, "But the true story is that I'd created the Joker based on an autobiographical incident. Everyone in my family was a championship bridge player, and so we always had decks of cards lying around the house. At the time I had a creative writing assignment due at Columbia University, where I was studying when I wasn't working on Batman. I figured I'd write a story about a villain, but I liked humor, I liked comedy. So I thought, I'll combine the two, and make a murderer who looks like the Joker in a deck of cards. I

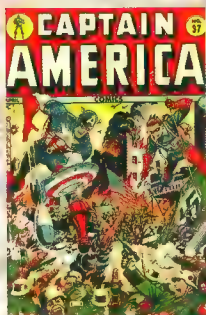


Boy Commandos #2 (DC, 1943) cover art by Joe Simon and Jack Kirby.

Nailing the Nazis

"I found a way to help the war effort by portraying the times in the form of comic characters. I was saying what was on my mind, and I was extremely patriotic!"

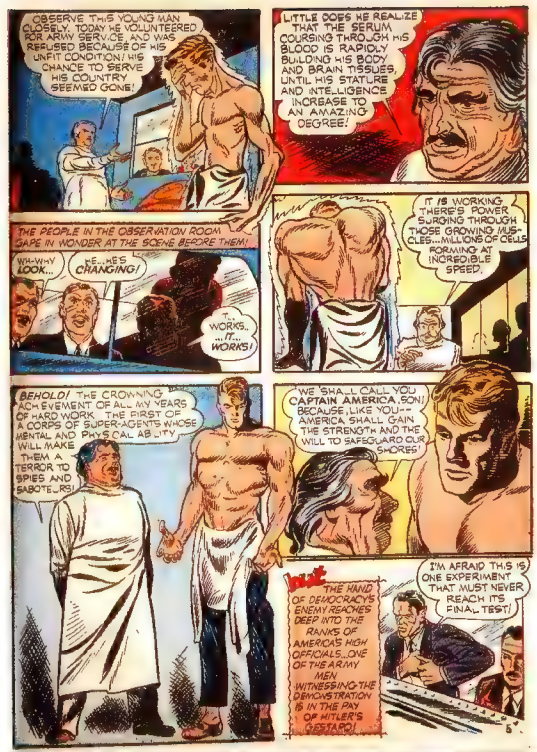
—Jack Kirby



comics writers," Stan Lee says, "we had to have villains in our stories. And once World War II started, the Nazis gave us the greatest villains in the world to fight against. It was a slam dunk." Captain Marvel fought Captain Nazi, the Aryan assassin and super-soldier. Captain America, created in 1941 by Jewish

cartoonists Joe Simon and Jack Kirby, took on the Nazi agent Red Skull. "Two Jews created this weak little guy named Steve Rogers who gets shot in the arm [by scientist Dr. Reinstein, a reference to Albert Einstein] and, by way of a 'secret serum,' becomes this super-strong

hero who starts destroying Nazis," explains political cartoonist Peter Kuper (*World War Three Illustrated*, *The New Yorker*, *MAD* magazine's "Spy Vs. Spy"). "What a distinctly empowering image." Simon and Kirby also created the Boy Commandos, a strip about an international group of patriotic children from Allied countries who aided in the war effort; the stories' final panels often depicted caricatures of Hitler being foiled by the chil-



Steve Rogers transforms into the Super Soldier, Captain America. From the origin of Captain America, *Captain America* #1 (Marvel, 1941).

dren's covert operations. The lesson: even children—like those who read comics—could play a heroic role in the battle against evil.

To demonstrate their patriotism, Jewish comics creators were careful to fashion superheroes they perceived as super American.

The all-powerful Steve Rogers, for example, was blond and blue-eyed. "When you're sitting down to write about an American hero within an American culture, you begin to devise those characters or characteristics that you regard as gentle," Eisner explains.

By 1943 comic-book publishing had become a multimillion-dollar industry, with monthly sales reaching a record 25 million copies. The AA and DC groups claimed approximately

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Superman #23 (DC, 1943).

TEROR



23
R-MAY

LN ID

TALES FROM THE CRYPT

AUTHORIZED
A. E. M. P.



10¢

FEATURING...



THE CRYPT-KEEPER



THE OLD WITCH



THE VAULT-KEEPER



FELDSTEIN

Cleaning Up the Comics



"The real question is this: Are comic books good, or are they not good? If you want to raise a generation that is half storm-troopers and half cannon-fodder with a dash of illiteracy, then comic books are good! In fact, they are perfect!"

—Dr. Frederick Wertham

"It would be just as difficult to explain the harmless thrill of a horror story to a Dr. Wertham as it would be to explain the sublimity of love to a frigid old maid..."

—William M. Gaines



one-third of the comic-book market, and second-tier companies, such as Quality and Timely, were showing solid profits as well. In another two years DC would absorb the AA Group and form a "DC Universe," making it possible for one DC hero, such as Green Lantern, to "guest-star" in Batman, another DC comic book, with a continuing and consistent story line.

All was going great—that is until...

Confronted with the growing popularity of comic books, in 1941 the General Federation of Women's Clubs and other organizations concerned with preserving "the innocence" of America's youth launched a campaign against the increasingly popular genre of "true crime" comics, which featured titles like "Boston's Bloody Gang War" and "Murder, Morphine and Me." Anticipating the coming storm, AA Group chief Max Gaines invited a number of prominent educators and psychologists to serve on his board of advisers. One of them, psychologist William Moulton Marston, invented a comic-book character he believed would set a positive example for America's children.

His creation, Wonder Woman—a crime-fighting, whimsical Amazon princess renowned for her highly ethical character—became the industry's first major female superhero. (Sheldon Mayer's Red Tornado, a feisty, female crime-fighter not to be confused with the later, more popular male superhero, was the first ever female comic-book superhero, but never gained a large following.) Other female superheroes read by both boys and girls would follow—Black Canary, Liberty Belle, Phantom Lady.

After having served as midwife to the first comic book, the first superhero, the first superhero group, and the first major female crime-fighter, Gaines decided it was time to move the genre in a new direction—ethical education. His new imprint,

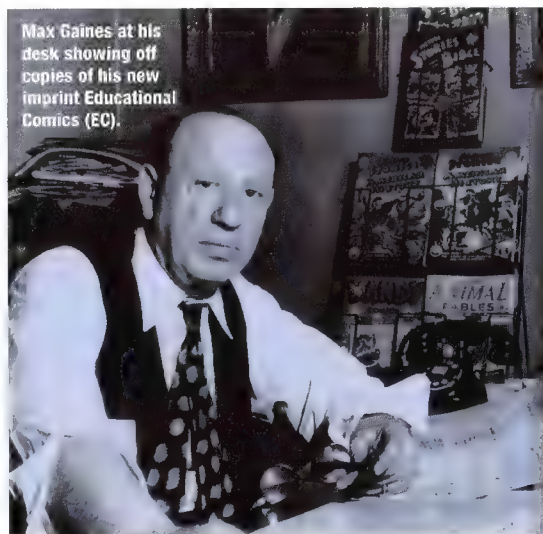
Educational Comics (EC), published such didactic titles as *Picture Stories from the Bible*, *Picture Stories from World History* and *Picture Stories from Science*. He issued strict guidelines to the EC creative staff—never show anyone being stabbed or shot; never show a scene of torture; never show a hypodermic needle; never show a coffin, especially with anyone in it—and he enlisted a group of rabbis, priests and other clergy to consult on the *Picture Stories* series. Yet the ever cost-conscious publisher often rejected their scholarly advice. "I don't give a damn how long it took Moses," he once screamed. "I want it (the story) in two panels!"

In 1945 Gaines sold out his one-third stake in the AA Group to his partners Liebowitz and Donenfeld for a half-million dollars. He retained only a handful of EC titles: *Tiny Tot Comics*, *Animal Fables* and the *Picture Stories* line. Working independently for the next two years, Gaines concentrated all his effort on the remaining titles, but EC consistently lost money.

Gaines' comics may have been morally sound, but children preferred tales of superheroes fighting heinous villains.

On August 20, 1947, Gaines was boating on Lake Placid, New York when suddenly another vessel came speeding toward him. There was no way to avoid the impending crash. In a heroic last act, Gaines threw the child of his friend Sam Irwin into the back of the boat just seconds before the collision, saving the boy's life. Absorbing the full impact of the crash, Gaines died instantly.

Max's son, Bill Gaines, a 25-year-old NYU student, took





Harvey Kurtzman refused to portray war as a glamorous affair, thus creating the first anti-war comic, *Two Fisted Tales* (EC, 1950), above art by Jack Davis.

titles such as *Weird Science* and *Weird Fantasy* as well as horror comics such as *The Vault of Horror* and *The Haunt of Fear*, which featured such gory tales as "Coffin Spell" and "Ooze in the Cellar." Educational Comics was renamed Entertaining Comics, and EC began making money. Writer/artist/editor Harvey Kurtzman joined the staff, creating two antiwar comics destined to become classics: *Two-Fisted Tales* and *Frontline Combat*. A strong advocate of social justice, Kurtzman refused to portray minorities as racist caricatures, a common practice at the time. In his Korean War tales, he sometimes told the story from the point of view of an enemy combatant, something that had never been done before in a comic book. "The comic-book companies tended to make war glamorous," Kurtzman said. "That offended me—so I turned my stories to antiwar."

What set EC apart from its competitors was a commitment to moral themes. Story lines often dealt with the evils of abusive relationships, misguided patriotism and racism. In writer Al Feldstein's "Judgment Day" (from *Weird Fantasy* #18, Mar/Apr 1953), for example, an Earth astronaut named Tarlton is sent to the planet Cybrinia to judge whether its robot

charge of EC comics at the urging of his mother. Trying to get the company out of the red, he issued a line of teen romance comics with sappy titles like *Modern Love*, *A Moon, A Girl...Romance* and *Saddle Romances*; they failed, miserably. Then, with the help of writer/artist/editor Al Feldstein, who shared Bill's passion for radio horror programs, Gaines dropped EC's line of detective comics (*Crime Patrol*, *War Against Crime*) in favor of lurid science-fiction comic

inhabitants are socially and technologically advanced enough to join the Earth's Galactic Republic. Determining that Cybrinia is a segregated society (the orange robots consign the blue robots to economic discrimination and ghettos), Tarlton decides that Cybrinia cannot be part of the Republic until its people, like

Continued on page 52



Socially conscious tales with twist endings such as "Judgment Day" (above) from *Weird Fantasy* #18 (EC, 1953), was the inspiration for such shows as *The Twilight Zone*, *The Outer Limits* and *Star Trek*. Art by Joe Orlando.

"Preachies"

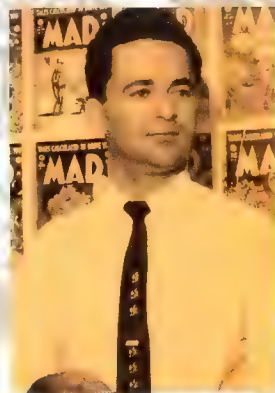
Despite Bill's firm beliefs in his role as a "capitalist," he was basically a "Liberal" (or at least professed to be!) and was extremely "socially conscious"...as was I.

So we were in friendly agreement on such pressing subjects as racial and religious intolerance in America... and, therefore, we naturally gravitated toward including and treating those subjects in our plots.

It was, as far as I can recall, a mutual effort to start to include what were later to be termed "preachies" in our story efforts.

The "preachies" were, indeed, deliberately included in SSS...but they were also in our Sci-Fi titles as well ("Judgment Day," etc)...many as allegories.

-Al Feldstein



YOU'LL BE JARRED BY THE STARTLING CLIMAX OF THIS SHOCKING NARRATIVE!

H A T E !

AT THE CURB, THE BIG RED MOVING-VAN STANDS QUIETLY... ITS REAR DOORS GAPING OPEN LIKE THE MOUTH OF SOME MECHANICAL MONSTER! EVEN NOW, THE HUSKY MOVERS ARE PULLING ARTICLES OF FURNITURE FROM WITHIN IT... LINING THE SIDEWALK BEFORE THE QUIANT WHITE HOUSE! ON THE PORCH A MAN AND A WOMAN STAND SILENTLY, STARING AT THE YELLOW SCRAP OF PAPER TACKED UPON THE SPOTLESS DOOR...

YOUR NAME IS JOHN SMITH! YOU'RE AN AMERICAN WITH A GOOD AMERICAN NAME! YOU'RE A CHURCHGOER... A FAMILY MAN... A RESPECTED MEMBER OF YOUR COMMUNITY! YOU'RE WATCHING THAT COUPLE ACROSS THE STREET READ THE NOTE YOU AND YOUR NEIGHBORS HAVE TACKED THERE...

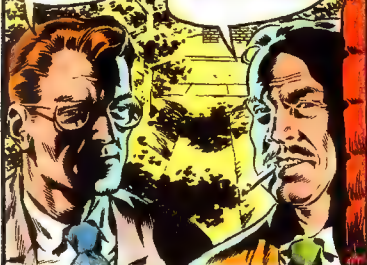


YES, JOHN SMITH! THEY'RE GOING INSIDE! PERHAPS THERE'S NO PLACE ELSE FOR THEM TO GO! YOU HATE THEM, DON'T YOU JOHN? YOU AND YOUR NEIGHBORS HATE JEWS...



IT DOESN'T MATTER THAT THEIR PARENTS AND THEIR PARENTS' PARENTS WERE BORN HERE, DOES IT, JOHN? THEY'RE JEWS! THAT'S ALL THAT MATTERS! YOU THINK THEY'RE DIFFERENT... AND YOU DON'T WANT THEM AROUND...

WHAT NEXT, ED? NOTES DON'T SCARE 'EM!
I DON'T KNOW! WE'LL HAVE TO THINK ABOUT IT! WE'LL HAVE TO DO SOMETHING!



SO NOW THEY'RE MOVED IN, JOHN! THE THREATS DIDN'T CHANGE THEIR MINDS! THE PHONE CALLS... THE LETTERS... THE SNIDE REMARKS YOU AND YOUR NEIGHBORS MADE! THEY DIDN'T SEEM TO MATTER TO THEM! PERHAPS THEY'RE USED TO THAT SORT OF THING, JOHN...

WELL, LET'S BREAK IT UP, BOYS! WE'LL TALK ABOUT IT TOMORROW... ON THE TRAIN!
OKAY, JOHN! HEY! WHAT'S THEIR NAMES AGAIN, CHARLIE?
GOLD! DAVE AND ETHEL GOLD!

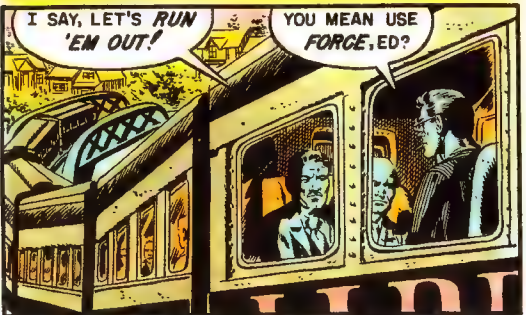


WHEN DID YOU FIRST LEARN TO HATE, JOHN? DID YOUR MOTHER TEACH IT TO YOU? DID YOUR CHILDHOOD FRIENDS WISE YOU UP? DID YOU LEARN IT FROM YOUR WIFE... YOUR CHILD? DID ED, YOUR NEIGHBOR, TIP YOU OFF? WHEN, JOHN? WHEN DID YOU BECOME INFECTED WITH THE DISEASE CALLED HATE?...

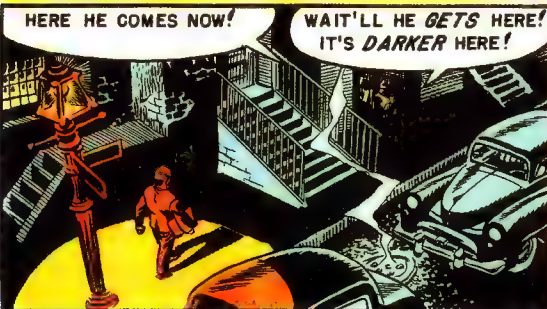
THEY LOOK LIKE NICE PEOPLE, JOHN! MAYBE THEY'LL BE ALL RIGHT! PERHAPS...
PERHAPS NOTHING, MARY! THEY'RE JEWS! THEY'RE NO GOOD!



DID YOUR FATHER... A SMALL TOWN DOCTOR... TELL YOU THAT, JOHN? DID HE LIST THE GENETIC DIFFERENCES BETWEEN YOU AND THEM? DID HE TELL YOU THEIR BLOOD WAS DIFFERENT... THEIR BONES... THEIR HEARTS? HE WAS A DOCTOR, JOHN! HE SHOULD HAVE KNOWN...



HE TAKES THE SAME TRAIN YOU DO, DOESN'T HE, JOHN? HE WEARS THE SAME KIND OF CLOTHES... EATS THE SAME KIND OF FOOD... SMOKES THE SAME BRAND OF CIGARETTES... ROOTS FOR THE SAME BASEBALL TEAM! BUT HE'S A JEW! SO YOU AND ED AND THE OTHERS WAIT FOR HIM ONE NIGHT...



WHY NOT? WE TRIED TO WARN 'EM NICELY! WE PHONED 'EM! WE WROTE 'EM LETTERS! MAYBE IF WE BEAT 'EM UP, THEY'LL SELL AND MOVE! OTHERWISE, MORE'LL START COMING IN!



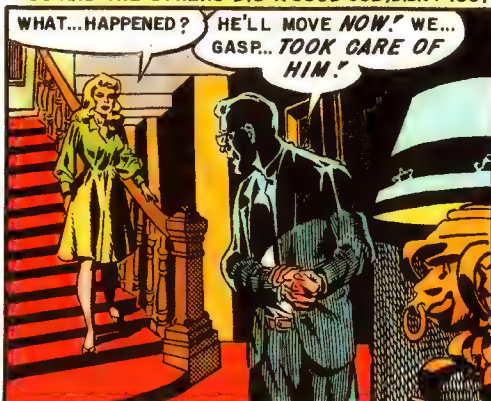
NO TELLING WHAT'LL HAPPEN TO OUR REAL-ESTATE VALUES IF THAT HAPPENS! MAYBE YOU'RE RIGHT, ED!



AND SUDDENLY YOU'RE UPON HIM... BEATING... KICKING... SWEARING...



AND YOU'RE A LITTLE SICK THAT NIGHT WHEN YOU GET HOME, AREN'T YOU, JOHN? THERE'S BLOOD-STAINS ON YOUR SHIRT... BLOOD ON YOUR HANDS! YOU AND THE OTHERS DID A GOOD JOB, DIDN'T YOU?



WHAT...HAPPENED? HE'LL MOVE NOW! WE... GASP... TOOK CARE OF HIM!

YOU DON'T SEE MUCH OF HIM AFTER THAT NIGHT, DO YOU, JOHN? HE TAKES A DIFFERENT TRAIN, NOW! HE CROSSES THE STREET TO AVOID YOU! BUT HE *DOESN'T* MOVE, DOES HE?...



STUBBORN @#?X! HE WON'T LEARN! THERE'S ONLY ONE WAY! WHAT'S THAT, ED?



BURN 'EM OUT! YOU MEAN SET FIRE TO THEIR HOUSE?



WHY NOT? THEY'LL HAVE TO MOVE! I DON'T KNOW! THAT'S PRETTY ROUGH! I'M FOR IT, ED!



IT'S BEGINNING TO SNOWBALL, ISN'T IT JOHN? IT'S GETTING MESSY NOW! YOU HADN'T PLANNED ON GOING THAT FAR, HAD YOU?...

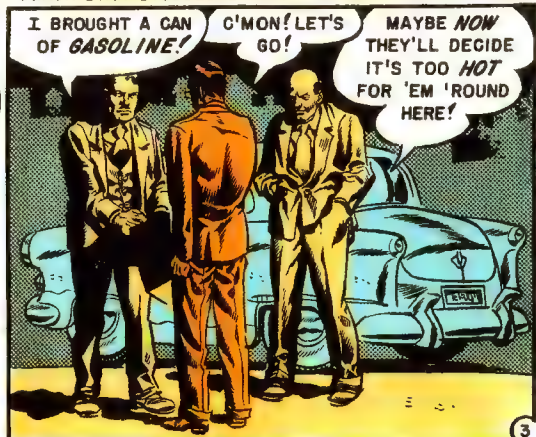
WHAT DO YOU SAY, JOHN? ALL RIGHT, ED! I...I'LL GO ALONG! TONIGHT... LATE!

THE PLANS ARE MADE! THE HATE FESTERS! YOU DON'T EVEN HEAR YOUR WIFE MARY'S WORDS! YOU'RE TOO ENGROSSSED IN WHAT LIES AHEAD FOR DAVE AND ETHEL GOLD...



I SAID YOUR MOTHER'S COMING TO VISIT US, JOHN! SHE WROTE! EH? OH! THAT'S NICE! YOU...YOU BETTER GO ON UP WITHOUT ME, MARY! I'VE GOT SOMETHING TO DO TONIGHT!

AND THEN YOU'RE OUT THERE, JOHN...UNDER THE BLACK STAR-STUDDED SKY...WITH THE BOYS...WHISPERING...



I BROUGHT A CAN OF GASOLINE! C'MON! LET'S GO! MAYBE NOW THEY'LL DECIDE IT'S TOO HOT FOR 'EM 'ROUND HERE!

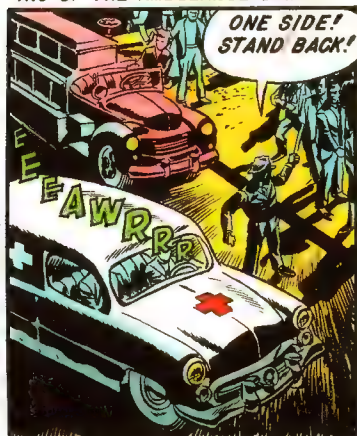
THE LIGHTED MATCH, TOSSED ON THE GASOLINE-SOAKED SHINGLES, ERUPTS INTO AN ORANGE GLOW! YOU WATCH AS THE HUNGRY FLAMES LEAP UP THE SIDES OF THE QUIANT WHITE HOUSE...



THEY'RE UP THERE...ON THE SECOND FLOOR...SCREAMING HYSTERICALLY! THE FIERY LIGHT OF THE CONSUMING FLAMES SILHOUETTES THEM...



AND THEN THE CONFUSION AS THE FIRE ENGINES ARRIVE! THE WAILING OF THE AMBULANCE SIREN...



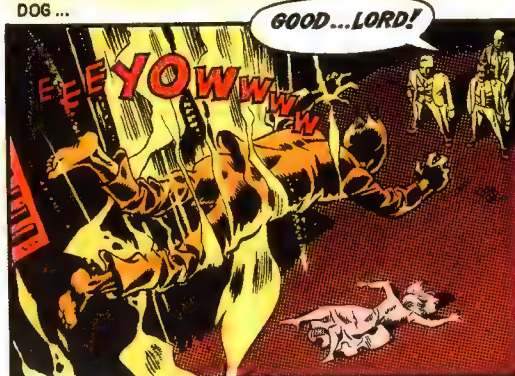
THE PANIC, AS THE NEIGHBORHOOD POURS OUT OF ITS HOUSES...



SOON THE HOUSE IS A ROARING INFERNO! YOU'RE UNEASY, JOHN! WHY DON'T THEY COME OUT? THE WHOLE BOTTOM FLOOR IS A MASS OF FLAME! SUDDENLY...

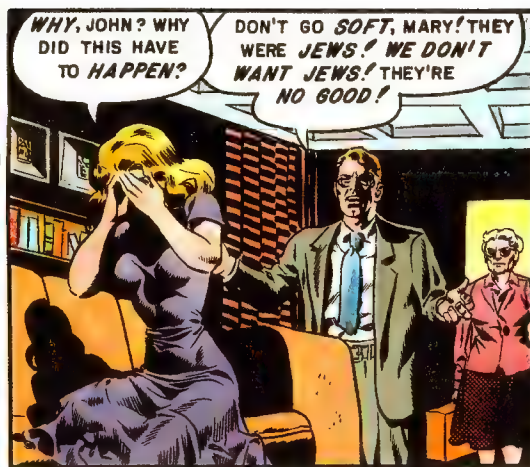
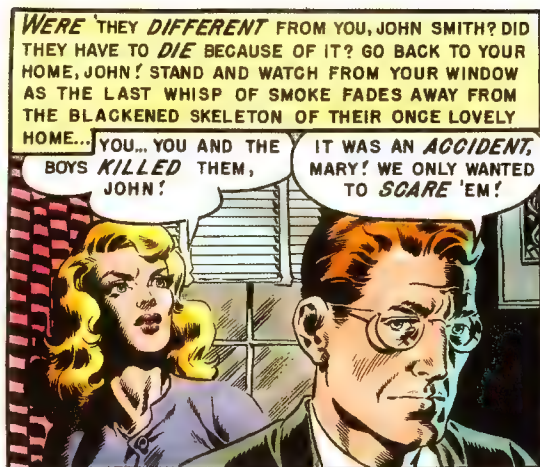


THE WOMAN LEAPS FIRST...HER BODY LIMP, LIKE A RAG DOLL! SHE HITS THE GROUND WITH A DULL THUD! THE MAN FOLLOWS, HOWLING LIKE A HURT DOG...



AND THE RELIEF WHEN THE FLAMES OF HATE ARE BROUGHT UNDER CONTROL... TEMPORARY RELIEF, FOR THE AMBULANCE DOCTOR ANNOUNCES...





ARE YOU LISTENING, JOHN? ARE YOU?

WE TOOK THAT BABY IN! WE BROUGHT HIM UP AS OUR OWN... AND SO, IN OUR OWN FAITH...

MA! YOU MEAN...

I NEVER INTENDED TO TELL YOU, JOHN! I NEVER HAD TO! YES! YOU'RE ADOPTED!

MA!

YOUR PARENTS... YOUR REAL PARENTS... WERE JEWISH!

ARE YOU DIFFERENT, JOHN? ARE YOU DIFFERENT, NOW? DO YOU FEEL ANY DIFFERENT? DO YOU LOOK ANY DIFFERENT? ARE YOU THE SAME MAN YOU WERE TEN MINUTES AGO... WATCHING THAT LAST WHISP OF SMOKE FADE AWAY...

OH, LORD! OH, LORD! WHAT... WHAT HAVE I DONE? SOB... SOB... WHAT... HAVE I... DONE...

COUGH! WELL... I'LL BE GOING...

NOW LOOK UP, JOHN! LOOK AT ED! LOOK HOW HE'S STARING AT YOU! DO YOU SEE IT, JOHN? DO YOU SEE THE HATE... THERE... IN HIS EYES...

ED! WAIT! ED!

LET HIM GO, JOHN! LET HIM GO!

WHAT NOW, JOHN? WHAT CAN YOU DO NOW, NOW THAT YOU'VE FOUND OUT...

HOW STUPID I'VE BEEN! HOW STUPID! STUPID!

COME TO BED, JOHN!

CAN YOU SLEEP, JOHN? CAN YOU CLOSE YOUR EYES AND NOT SEE THOSE SILHOUETTES AGAINST THE FIERY FLAMES... THOSE SCREAMING FIGURES... FALLING... LIKE RAG DOLLS?...

OH, LORD! LORD! FORGIVE ME!

AND HOW DO YOU LIKE IT, JOHN, WHEN THE BOYS TURN AWAY WHEN YOU SIT NEXT TO THEM ON THE TRAIN?...



ED! FOR PETE'S SAKE!
WE'VE KNOWN EACH OTHER
TEN YEARS!

OR WHEN THEY CROSS THE STREETS TO AVOID YOU?...

CHARLIE! IT'S JOHN! THE SAME JOHN!
IS THERE ANYTHING DIFFERENT ABOUT ME?



HOW ABOUT THE TIME YOUR SON COMES HOME FROM SCHOOL...RAGGED
...TORN...CUT...BRUISED?...

YOU'RE JOHN SMITH! YOU'RE AN AMERICAN, JOHN! HOW CAN THEY DO THIS TO YOU? HOW?...

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE, JOHN? WHAT MADE YOU HATE THEM? WHY DO THEY HATE YOU NOW?



THEY CALLED ME...SOB...
THEY CALLED ME A
JEW-BOY!



WHAT DOES IT SAY, JOHN?

IT...IT SAYS,
'MOVE...JEW!'
**'WE DON'T WANT
JEWS IN THIS
NEIGHBORHOOD!'**

CAN'T YOU SEE? CAN'T YOU SEE HOW WRONG WE ARE... HOW WRONG WE'VE BEEN?

SCRAM...
JEW!



HATE IS DEEP, JOHN! HATE IS IMBEDDED! WHERE DO WE LEARN IT? WHO TEACHES IT TO US? HOW CAN IT BE UNTAUGHT? LOOK JOHN! THEY'RE WAITING FOR YOU... THERE... IN THAT DARK PLACE...



MAYBE YOU'LL GET THE IDEA, JEW!

WE DON'T WANT YOU, CRUMB!

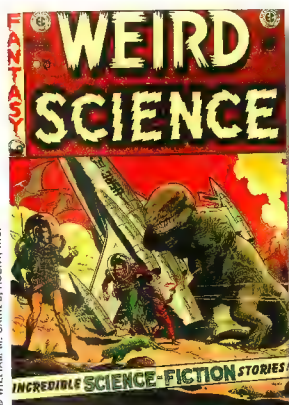
MOVE, BLAST YOU!

THE BEATING IS PAINFUL, ISN'T IT JOHN? IS IT YOUR PUNISHMENT? MUST PAIN BE THE ONLY TEACHER? CAN'T WE LEARN WITHOUT PAIN? CAN'T WE LEARN TO LOVE... INSTEAD OF TO HATE? YOU'RE LEARNING NOW, AREN'T YOU? THE KICKING... THE SWEARING... IT'S TEACHING YOU...



BUT THE OTHERS! WHEN WILL THEY LEARN? THE END

© WILLIAM M. GAINES, AGENT, INC.



Although their horror titles sold better, Gaines and Feldstein took great pride in their science fiction titles. They combined literate text and sensational art, with Wally Wood's cover above being a fine example.

Jews in Comics

Continued from page 44

those on Earth, have learned to live together without discrimination. When Tarlton returns to his spaceship, he removes his helmet, and we see that he is a handsome Black man, "...the beads of perspiration on his dark skin twinkling like distant stars..." This O. Henry-style twist ending, typical of EC's horror and sci-fi stories, presaged the morality tales of later TV shows such as *Twilight Zone*, *Alfred Hitchcock Presents* and *Star Trek*.

Gaines' successful turnaround of his father's failing company led to scores of imitators that produced horror, crime and science-fiction comics with no redeeming social qualities. Alarmed parents

who vehemently objected to the "filth" their children were reading found an ally in psychologist Dr. Frederic Wertham, author of *The Seduction of the Innocent*, a study on the negative effects of comic books. Wertham condemned most of the genre—especially crime and horror comics—for contributing to juvenile delinquency and cited dozens of cases of children who had committed murders, injuries and suicides after reading comics. He also portrayed Batman, Robin and Wonder Woman as closeted gay and lesbian superheroes, a damning accusation in those deeply homophobic times, and ironic, given the fact that Wonder Woman had been created as a

positive role model by a fellow psychologist.

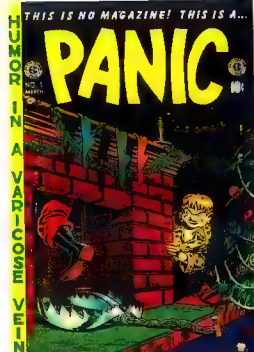
Much of the slander directed against Gaines and his fellow comic-book publishers was motivated by anti-Semitism. A *Hartford Courant* editorial, for instance, referred to comics as "the filthy stream that flows from the gold-plated sewers of New York"—a code phrase for "Jewish businesses." Comic-book burnings became a familiar sight across the country, and some of the so-called "disgusting" literature was seized by police. The attorney general of Massachusetts called for the banning of

Gaines' humor comic *Panic* after it ran a spoof of "A Visit From St. Nicholas" (commonly known by its opening line, "Twas the Night Before Christmas"), charging that it was actually stirring up a *bona fide* panic by "desecrating Christmas." New York police seized and quarantined issues of *Panic* until Gaines went to court and won their release.

As the outcry following the publication of *Seduction of the Innocent* grew, so did the call for government intervention. On April 21, 1954, the Subcommittee to Investigate Juvenile Delinquency of the Committee on the Judiciary opened in Manhattan federal court. Gaines was the only comic-book publisher willing to testify, but due to the effects of having taken the weight-loss drug Dexedrine, his performance on the witness stand was less than stellar. The more Senator Estes Kefauver and his committee grilled the groggy Gaines, the more his speech slurred. "The media jumped on that," says *MAD* cartoonist Drew Friedman of the televised hearings. "It was so unfair. They portrayed him as some slovenly Jewish pornographer."

Reeling from this debacle, Gaines called an emergency meeting of his fellow comic-book publishers, who agreed with him that immediate action was necessary—but instead of fighting back, they decided to form a self-censoring comics authority. They also voted to ban the words "crime, horror, terror and weird" from comic books, effectively casting EC as the scapegoat for the entire industry. As most of Gaines' titles contained at least one of these words, he had no choice but to suspend publication of his horror and suspense comics.

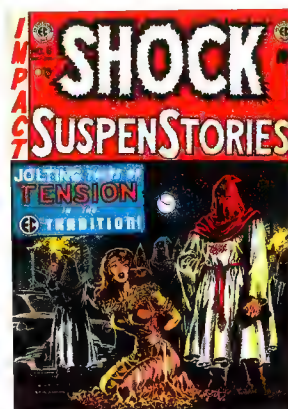
Established on September 16, 1954, the Comics Code Authority, headed by former judge Charles F. Murphy, transformed the genre. Ninety percent of the industry adopted the CCA's code, which prohibited the depiction of vampires, zombies, werewolves and ghouls. Policemen, government employees and other authority figures had to be portrayed in a respectful manner; evil characters could be depicted only for the purpose of illuminating a moral issue; and all "lurid, unsavory and gruesome" illustrations were disallowed. To be sold on newsstands or in



The Attorney General of Massachusetts called for the banning of Gaines' humor comic *Panic* after it ran a spoof of "A Visit From St. Nicholas"

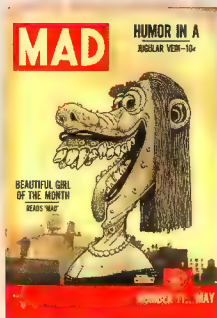


William Gaines is unfairly crucified by Sen. Kefauver and his subcommittee investigating juvenile delinquency.



Shock Suspense Stories (EC, 1952), tackled tough subjects that other publishers refused to touch.

Kurtzman's MAD World



© EC COMICS

"I don't think it's going too far to say that for my generation, the generation that protested the Vietnam War, growing up with Harvey's MAD and Harvey's war comics shaped the situation to allow our generation to protest that war. It was comics about media that made you question how you get your information, and that's a necessary component toward taking any kind of political action."

—Art Spiegelman

drugstores, comic books had to carry the "Approved" Comics Code Authority seal.

By 1955 the only EC publication still in print was MAD, which had dodged the axe through a clever maneuver—Gaines had transformed the comic book into a magazine (issue 24, 25¢), exempting it

from CCA regulations.

MAD had been created as a comic book three years earlier by the socially crusading Harvey Kurtzman, who'd written, edited and helped illustrate the first several issues. Subtitled "Humor in a Jugular Vein" and designed to appeal to both teens and adults, it was the first satirical comic book to address the nation's social ills and challenge its sacred cows. In 1954, for example, MAD #17 attacked Senator Joseph R. McCarthy's televised hearings on Communist infiltration of the U.S. Army

with "What's My Shine?," a parody of the TV game show *What's My Line?*, which had been preempted by the hearings; Kurtzman was deriding the hearings as having as much validity as a Hollywood game show. MAD also gave a wink to Jewish readers with the constant use of Yiddishisms, such as "fershlugginer," "schmaltz," "oy," and "feh"—Kurtzman's way of tossing matzah balls at the white-bread WASPy veneer of his competitors' comics. Explains Al Jaffee: "MAD made fun of pretentiousness; they made fun of the nobleman. Because none of them were noblemen. It's basic irreverence."

MAD's conversion from a comic book to a bimonthly magazine marked the end of the Golden Age of comic books, which, for its creators, was like a drama in two acts. In act

one, Jews seeking to escape poverty invented a new genre that melded popular art and storytelling, and projected Jewish (and adolescent) power fantasies onto their "all-American" superhero creations. During the shorter second act, the five-year reign of EC Comics was marked by an overriding concern about morality, sometimes emanating from a Jewish sensibility. In the words of *The X-Men* creator Stan Lee: "To me you can wrap all of Judaism up in one sentence, and that is, 'Do not do unto others...' All I tried to do in my stories was show that there's some innate goodness in the human condition. And there's always going to be evil; we should always be fighting evil."

Arie Kaplan is a writer for MAD magazine who has also written for Entertainment Weekly, Time Out New York and the MTV series Total Request Live.

Next month: Part II, Silver Age



MAD #17 (EC, 1954) attacked Senator Joseph R. McCarthy's televised hearings on Communist infiltration of the U.S. Army with "What's My Shine?," a parody of the TV game show *What's My Line?*.

Robert Maxwell

by Will Murray

There's a great story behind the life and times of Robert Maxwell. I just wish I had the complete picture. But the outlines are absolutely fascinating.

He is a guy who maybe never wrote a comic book in his entire life—although we cannot really be sure of that—yet one who had a huge impact on DC Comics, and especially Superman.

Maxwell first surfaces as a significant DC player in 1940 when he pops up as producer/writer of the *Superman* radio show. It was Maxwell who cast a reluctant Clayton "Bud" Collyer as the Man of Steel.

"It was a funny thing," recalled Collyer. "I fought with Bob Maxwell, who owned the rights to the thing.... The whole idea embarrassed me, so I said no."

But Maxwell would not be dissuaded. If he couldn't get the versatile radio actor, who could easily switch voices for the

critical transformation

to Superman, he would have to cast separate players for Clark Kent and the Man of Steel. Maxwell got Collyer to play a Kryptonian background character in the origin episode, and then invited him back for the second episode, where Superman first landed on Earth.

Collyer recalled Maxwell telling him, "'Just audition and we'll use you in some parts if it does go on the air.' Well, it did go on the air and when I came in, he said, 'You're Superman!' I again picked up the scripts, handed them to him and tried to walk out of the studio and get out of the show."

But Maxwell ultimately prevailed.

Retitled *The Adventures of Superman*, the show went national on the Mutual network in 1942 and ran until 1951, piling up over 1,000 shows. Over successive seasons, Maxwell served as producer, director and head writer. Under his creative guidance, the Superman mythos acquired such important elements as Perry White (introduced in the first month), Jimmy Olsen (introduced in the 28th episode) and Kryptonite (1943).

Maxwell wrote many of the scripts himself, giving the adventures of the Man of Steel a dark pulpy flavor. (George Lothar, who wrote the 1942

Adventures of Superman book, later served as scripter/narrator.)

Maxwell parlayed his expertise in things Man of Steelish into a gig as producer of RKO's *Superman* and the *Mole Men* feature in 1951, penning the screenplay with DC editor-in-chief Whitney Ellsworth as "Richard Fielding."

This led to *The Adventures of Superman* on TV. The radio show was quickly cancelled. Radio drama had become passé. TV was the hot new medium. Maxwell produced the first season, once again resorting to the Richard Fielding byline to disguise his work on the origin episode, "Superman on Earth." It was a very controversial first season. But then Maxwell was a very tough person to work for, on radio and TV.

"He was appreciated better from a distance," as one anonymous *Superman* actor put it.

As DC's representative on the show, it was Maxwell's job to safeguard the Superman legend—even if he seemed indifferent to the human dimension of his responsibilities.



Harry Donenfeld with radio stars Bud Collyer and Joan Alexander.



Once, when the piano wires that held George Reeves high in the air gave way, dropping the actor 12 feet to the stage floor, it was Maxwell's job to keep it out of the papers.

"After all," he reportedly said, "we couldn't tell the world that the great Superman had crash-landed on the movie lot."

Rumor has it Maxwell was a very hard drinker.

Maxwell's take on Superman was strictly out of his own radio show. He believed in violent, uncompromising heroes and vicious sadistic bad guys. Many of his *Superman* TV episodes like "The Evil Three," "Crime Wave" and "The Stolen Costume" (which Maxwell recycled from an old radio script) depict a grim avenging Man of Steel. Unfortunately, these were the dark days of Frederic Wertham. A decision was made to revamp *Superman* as a children's show, and Maxwell was out the door.

"He had way too much crimebuster stuff," recounted scripter Jackson Gillis, who came in after Maxwell left, "because obviously Superman can corral any criminal, unless you have a really colorful criminal who has a devilish way of using the sewers or something, you lose any fun out of it."

DC President Jack Liebowitz once asserted that the real reasons for Maxwell's departure were more economic than creative.

"Kellogg's was paying us \$17,000 for a half hour," he recalled. "Maxwell said he could produce it for \$13,000. I said, 'If you do that, I'll give you the difference.' But the first shows cost us \$28,000 each."

Maxwell cast everyone from George Reeves to Robert Shayne—except for Noel Neill as Lois Lane. (Wife Jessica reportedly cut first-season Lois Phyllis Coates' long hair into the Lois Lane do.)

Where did Robert Maxwell come from? Now that is the interesting part.

The byline Robert Maxwell first surfaces in the early '30s in a flock of girlie magazines like *Spicy Stories*, *Pep*, *Bedtime Stories*, and *La Paree*. At some point, Harry Donenfeld, then a printer of dubious reputation, acquires these magazines. This presumably is how Maxwell and Donenfeld met. We don't know.

We do know that Maxwell was a prolific contributor to these magazines under the name Claire Kennedy. He sold a story or two to Street Smith's *Wild West Weekly* under that name, and the S&S files reveal "Miss" Kennedy to be in reality Mr. Maxwell. He seems also to have written as Roberta Maxwell.

His real name might not have been Bob Maxwell. One auditioning radio writer referred to him as Maxwell Joffe, suggesting that was his true name, and Robert Maxwell was his professional working name. It's generally believed by long-time DC personnel that his true name was Robert Maxwell Joffe.

As the thirties rolled on, Maxwell continued grinding out sexy stuff. When Donenfeld launched the notorious Culture line of pulps—*Spicy Detective Stories*, *Spicy-Adventure*, etc., Maxwell's name is conspicuously absent. Perhaps he was writing for them under other names. A lot of writers unembar-



Robert Maxwell, the Donenfelds, and Whitney Ellsworth.

assed to appear in the merely sexy *Bedtime Stories* quailed before being identified with the sex-and-sadism mix of the *Spicies*. A Charles Maxwell is given as the byline on "Diana Daw," a two-page comics feature running in *Spicy-Adventure Stories* all through the 1930s. Maybe that was him.

Early in 1939, under pressure from censors, Donenfeld's girlie pulps are all cancelled. Their postal permits had been revoked. It probably mattered not at all to Donenfeld and Maxwell.

Superman was taking the world by storm.

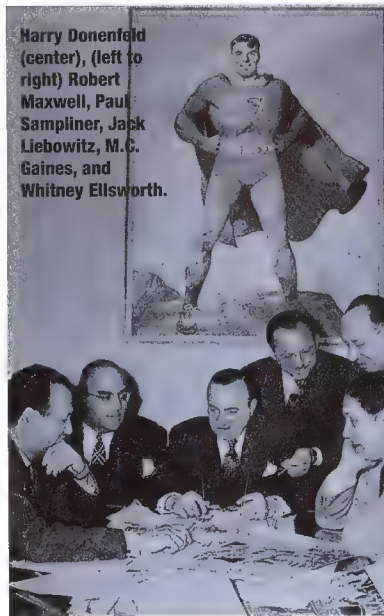
Somehow, Maxwell jumped from salacious stories to a staff position in charge of Superman licensing. With his wife Jessica, they conceived the idea of putting Superman on the air in 1940.

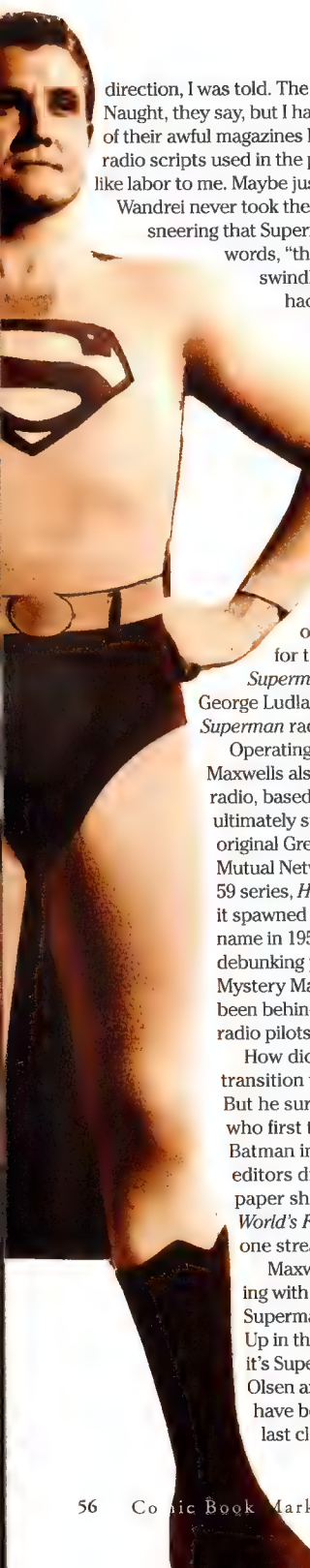
Howard Wandrei, a prolific writer for Donenfeld's *Spicy* pulp chain, was approached to take over scripting the program late in 1940, and wrote his father:

"This is a bad prospect, because Maxwell Joffe is hard to get along with, besides which he wants rewrite after rewrite and doesn't know what he wants.... I heard a broadcast of that program a couple of days ago for the first time, and it stank. The stink, of course, is the reason why Maxwell is looking for a new writer.... A lot of rewriting would discourage me fast, and apparently Maxwell is that way. I know someone who tried working with him and gave up in disgust."

Later, Wandrei visited Maxwell and described the place in memorable detail:

"The office is a strange place, being jammed with funny toy guns, candy, gum, gadgets like cigar lighters, and all kinds of merchandise labeled Superman. The latest was on the desk—a plain shirt, and a sample of Superman labels in a strip to be cut and each sewed on a shirt's neckband. Maxwell put a transcription on one of these Ansley Dynaphone outfits, and all the gentlemen departed in haste, leaving me to suffer alone. Their own program and all their writers are total anathema to them. They're afraid the program will go sour all of a sudden, and my fiendish ingenuity is going to save them.... Just get the program going in the right





direction, I was told. The labor involved? Naught, they say, but I have a whole swatch of their awful magazines here, plus several radio scripts used in the past; and it looks like labor to me. Maybe just labored."

Wandrei never took the job, years later sneering that Superman was, in his words, "the most depressing swindle of pure corn and hackneying in my experience." To each his own.

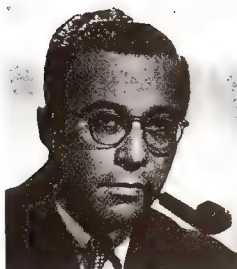
Maxwell himself

might have been responsible for some of those early lackluster *Superman* scripts. He produced with press agent Allen Ducovny several unaired *Superman* radio pilots before finally syndicating the show out of his own office. It took until 1942 for the Mutual Network to air *Superman* nationally. The obscure George Ludlam is the earliest known *Superman* radio scripter.

Operating as Maxwell Productions, Inc., the Maxwells also produced *Hop Harrigan* for radio, based on the *All-American* feature that ultimately surrendered the lead spot to the original Green Lantern. This aired on the Mutual Network between 1942-48. Their 1945-59 series, *House of Mystery*, was so successful it spawned the DC comic book of the same name in 1951, minus the show's supernatural-debunking protagonist, Roger Elliott, the Mystery Man. Maxwell is believed to have been behind two different abortive *Batman* radio pilots in the '40s and '50s.

How did a sex pulp writer make the transition to radio mogul? No one recalls. But he sure made his mark. It was Maxwell who first teamed up Superman and Batman in 1945—something the DC editors didn't bother doing until wartime paper shortages forced them to shrink *World's Finest*, combining two heroes into one streamlined strip.

Maxwell is also credited with coauthoring with Alan Ducovny the famous Superman opening that began with: "Look! Up in the Sky! Is it a Bird? Is it a plane? No, it's Superman!" The character of Jimmy Olsen and the invention of kryptonite have been credited to him—although the last claim, made by Superman editor



Maxwell is also credited with coauthoring with Alan Ducovny (above) the famous Superman opening that began with: "Look! Up in the Sky! Is it a Bird? Is it a plane? No, it's Superman!"

Mort Weisinger, is disputable.

One of the more intriguing questions surrounding Robert Maxwell was this: If Maxwell created Jimmy Olsen, did he name him after fellow *Spicy* contributor James P. Olsen? Or might he have *been* James P. Olsen? Again, no one knows for certain. (A writing Jimmie—he spelled it with an ie, not a y—Olsen is said to have hailed from California, but the world is full of James Olsens, then as now.)

Ironically, once Maxwell stopped writing Superman on TV, another infamous former *Spicy* pulp writer was drafted for the job—the super-prolific Robert Leslie Bellem. DC obviously liked to keep these things in the family.

After Maxwell was canned from *Superman*, he landed on his feet. He brought *Lassie* to TV, after buying the rights from *Lassie*'s trainer, Rudd Weatherwax, for about five thousand dollars. Three years later, in 1957, when Tommy Rettig had outgrown the role of Jeff and Jon Provost was brought in to play Timmy, Maxwell, afraid the change would doom the show, sold the *Lassie* TV property to Jack Wrather for three and one half million. *Lassie* ran to 1974, proving you can cut a great deal and still end up a loser.

Of Maxwell's next efforts, *Cannonball* flopped, and *National Velvet* lasted only two seasons. His *Father of the Bride* bombed in 1962. After that, he seems to have vanished from the vast wasteland of early US television.

Maxwell—or his byline—later resurfaced on a stack of low-rent early 1960s sex novels, with titles like *The Jaded Sex* and *Mistress Fury*.

Is this the same Robert Maxwell? The timing is right. And the name of a character in *The Jaded Sex* is the same as the male lead in the old *Diana Daw* strip, Ted Morton. But why would a rich former producer go slumming like that? Was he going through a second childhood? Or a second adolescence? Did he squander his money? We may never know the truth.

When Maxwell died of a heart attack in Toronto on February 3, 1971, his obit indicated he had been producing TV programs for the Canadian Broadcasting Company for the six years before his death. Two forgotten '70s films, *The Bushbaby* and *Vengeance is Mine* (AKA *Blood for Blood*), are credited to him during this latter period.

And so ended the meteoric career of Robert Maxwell Joffe, or whoever he *really* was. He rose up from porn and just possibly flirted with it one final time before the end.

But he should always be remembered as the man who took Superman out of the four-color forest and made him a true multimedia superstar.



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**GOOD
CLEAN**

by
Jon Berk

FUN

Collecting in our hobby can take many forms. Comic book collecting itself stretches from the mid 1930s to the present, with "Ages," titles, characters, or genres forming the basis of collecting goals. Another facet of collecting is the acquisition of original art from these periods. Less well known and appreciated are the collectibles associated with comic books—often referred to as memorabilia. Posters, rings, pin-backs and other premiums were offered not only as a way to part additional nickels and dimes from kids but also to promote the "product" itself.

Of course, these types of promotions have been around as long as the Brownies and Yellow Kid in the world of

character strips and books. My main age of interest is and has been, for many years, the Golden Age and the pre-hero age of comic books from *Funnies on Parade* to the advent of Superman in *Action Comics* #1. Through my thirty years of collecting, my focus has been on books and, more recently, the ever elusive art from this period. The pre-hero collecting has been driven by my interest of comic book creation in a historical context—examining and finding the "acorn" from which the "mighty oak" of this story-telling medium grew. However, as I am reminded, comic books and the characters contained therein must also be viewed in the broader context of "marketing." Have the character sell a book, or buy a product and get the

character or get products with the character. And of course, there were the comic clubs for these characters.

This area of collecting is certainly one not well known to me, but is the collecting nirvana of many—with people like Ted Hake and his auctions catering to the inexhaustible demand for this rapidly increasing area. Like some comic books, the sheer rarity of these items has kept the market down and somewhat unto itself. In this area, the "pure" rarity of the item—despite the comic character it represents—often drives its value. Compare Yellow Kid cigarette buttons to the extremely rare pins of lesser known characters such as Capt. Battle and U.S. Jones. This overly long introduction is to set the stage for a recent acquisition that



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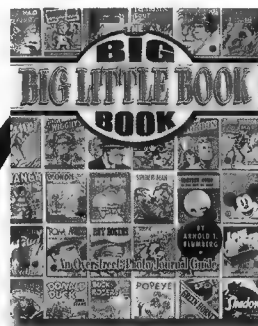
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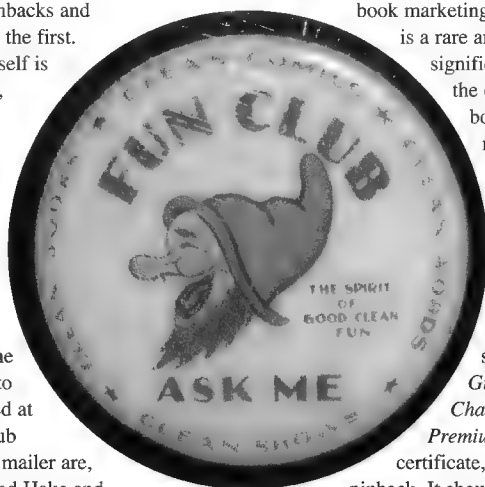
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Jolly Bill
Chief Funster

first offered in *New Fun* #3 (Apr 1935) for a mere ten cents. In the context of comic book pinbacks and clubs, this was the first. The pinback itself is extremely rare, with four examples thought to exist. Rarer still is the Club Membership card and mailer. Only recently was the latter brought to light. Purchased at auction, the club certificate and mailer are, according to Ted Hake and John Snyder, the only known examples to exist. The pin and certificate have



been "reunited." Clearly, from any perspective in the spectrum of comic book marketing and lore, this is a rare and historical significant example of the earliest comic book memorabilia. Reproduced for the first time in a mass distributed forum (it has yet to be shown in Hake's *Guide to Character Toy Premiums*), is the certificate, mailer and pinback. It should not be surprising that the item was sent to "Roswell, New Mexico."

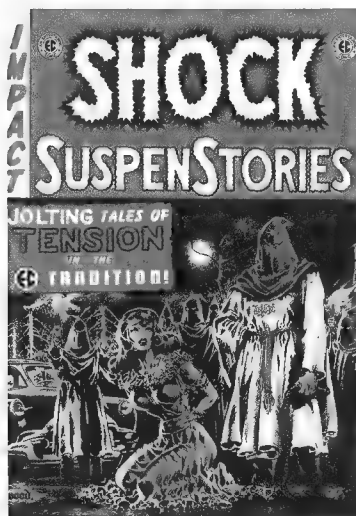


THE RECOGNITION OF

by Bhub Stewart

Richard Corliss, in "The Glory and Horror of EC Comics" (*Time Online*), notes that EC introduced the titles *Crime Illustrated*, *Terror Illustrated*, *Shock Illustrated* and *Romance Illustrated* at a time when "the word had become marketable the year before, with Time Inc.'s introduction of *Sports Illustrated*."

The magazine *Shock Illustrated* evolved from EC's earlier *Shock Suspense Stories*, and when Bill Gaines chose those titles, it's likely he did not have in mind this line from Herman Melville: "For genius, all over the world, stands hand in hand, and one shock of recognition runs the whole circle round."



But as popularized by the critic Edmund Wilson in *The Shock of Recognition* (1943), Wilson's anthology charting the progress of American literature through "the moments when genius becomes aware of its kin," the phrase is apt. In its

recognition and refraction of such writers as Ray Bradbury, Bennett Cerf, Miriam Allen DeFord, H.P. Lovecraft, Damon Knight, Katherine MacLean, A.E. van Vogt and Cornell Woolrich, EC peeled to the core of American popular literature, and EC was, in turn, recognized and absorbed by a score of creative talents, including Ralph Bakshi, George Carlin, Ramsey Campbell, John Carpenter, Max Collins, the Firesign Theatre, Valerie Harper, Walter Hill, Stephen King, Robert Klein, Jack Nicholson, George Romero, Thomas Tryon, Bernie Wrightson and Frank Zappa.

The haunting *Breakthrough* (Ballantine, 1977) by EC reader Ken Grimwood extends an EC-like plot to novel-length, stretching the suspense toward a totally unpredictable EC-like surprise ending; Grimwood's grim tale was a story that producer William Castle had wanted to film. The powerful and compelling novelette "Sequatchie" (*Esquire*, July 1967) by former EC Fan-Addict William Meyers is an obvious (and highly successful) attempt to blend EC plotting with a Thomas Wolfe-like prose style. Stanley Kubrick's film of Stephen King's *The Shining* (1980) can be viewed in a new light once one learns that Jack Nicholson was intentionally recreating maniacal characters he

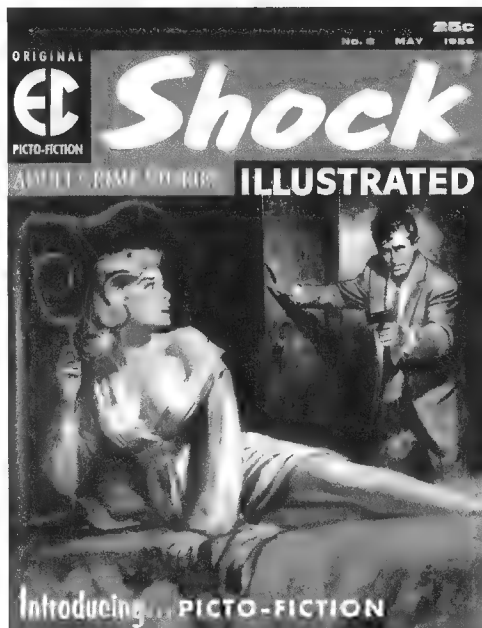


remembered from his reading of

EC Comics years earlier.

EC's impact on popular culture has been considerable: Max Gaines' Educational Comics may not have been very entertaining comics, but Bill Gaines' Entertaining Comics were genuinely educational in their pervasive influence on artists, editors, writers, performers and filmmakers.

Who could have foreseen this back in the early 1950s when comic books were under attack? In the chapter titled



"Retooling for Illiteracy" in *Seduction of the Innocent* (1954), Fredric Wertham (1895-1981) wrote, "Comic-book writing is also extremely poor in style and language. It is no help to the child to learn such barbaric neologisms as *suspenstories* (the name of an 'authorized' comic book)." Barbaric? Today, language abounds with such a polyglot of puns, lingual leaps and jargon compressions that Wertham's comment appears absurd.

Back in the 1950s, a non-comics reader, passing a newsstand and giving a casual glance at *Shock Illustrated* and *Shock SuspenStories*, might have seen these as typically exploitative titles—low-grade imitations, perhaps, of radio's *Suspense* and *Lights Out* (which both debuted on TV in 1949), TV's *Danger* (1950) or Alfred Werker's 1946 movie *Shock* with Vincent Price.

To a constant EC reader of 1952, however, the debut issue of *Shock SuspenStories* was something of a washout. The initial "sampler" structure (one crime story, one horror tale, one science fiction, one Al Feldstein-scripted war story) not only failed to introduce any radically new departure in content, some concluded that the comic did not electrify, as promised by the cover logo design, and also did not "jolt" or "shock" as much as previous EC fare. It also proved somewhat disappointing to those readers who preferred one genre over others. If a regular reader of only one type of EC book—say, EC's sf—purchased *Shock SuspenStories* only for the sf story, he might have been left with an irritating feeling that he had paid ten cents for only a single story, one beneath the level of quality in *Weird Fantasy* and *Weird Science*. This was precisely the problem faced by Hugh Hefner on 5 September 1961 when he unveiled his doomed *Show Business Illustrated* magazine; many were not inclined to purchase Hef's colorful new magazine for only a few pages about their particular interest, jazz, opera, theater or whatever.

The first issue of *Shock SuspenStories* followed the usual genre conventions

and the established plot patterns of other EC stories, but it was evident from the cover of *Shock SuspenStories* #2 that Gaines had actually conceived the new title as a format for matters of deeper concern. With "The Patriots!" (illustrated by Jack Davis) the "Shock SuspenStory" was born in 1952, and far from being a label of meaningless hype, the "Shock SuspenStory" eventually proved to be a major advance for EC, providing Gaines and Feldstein with the ideal forum for dramatizing their opinions on the human condition just as *Two-Fisted Tales* and *Frontline Combat* were for Harvey Kurtzman.

In the early 1950s atmosphere of apathy, whispers, euphemisms and fear, newsman Lyle Stuart, vowing to tell the truth newspapers were suppressing, launched his 1951 tabloid *Expose*. Gaines was a charter subscriber who later invested in *Expose* to keep Stuart from going out of business—and also hired Stuart as EC's business manager in 1953. Before Lyle Stuart, Inc. became a leading publishing house, Stuart published his initial titles during the early 1960s from 225 Lafayette Street, the same building where he had worked for EC. *Mad* contributor Paul Krassner also published his groundbreaking countercultural magazine of commentary, satire and hoaxes, *The Realist*, from that address, on the same floor and only a few doors



The cast of radio's *Lights Out*.

QUEST STIRRED! CORA PITONES FORWARD! FANNY HE AND DROPPED TO THE FLOOR! AUNT GLORENCE PT BERNARD GRINNED AT THE DECAPITATED CORPSES!



away from Stuart's office. The entrance to 225 Lafayette Street became a portal to dissent and radical thought.

Gaines, in 1951, admired Stuart's *Expose*, and he also saw the potential for EC stories that tackled controversial current events with a similar slant. Stirring that concept into the bubbling EC cauldron, Gaines finally served up a concoction that had, to borrow a phrase from art critics Ian Dunlop and Robert Hughes, "the shock of the new": a comic book examining post-war anti-Red hysteria, obsessive guilt, police corruption, alcoholism, racial persecution, rape, drug addiction, anti-Semitism and the brute force of vigilante mobs—all "published bi-monthly by Tiny Tot Comics, Inc." Surrounding it on

the newsstands, in cities and towns of all sizes, were the usual copies of *Cosmo Cat*, *Ha Ha Comics*, *Leave It to Binky*, *Ghostly Weird Comics*, *Funny Folks*, *Little Roquefort*, *Katie Keene*—hundreds of them. There had been earlier attempts at “true” comics (*Picture News*, *Heroic Comics*, *True Comics*), but Gaines and Feldstein were attempting to grapple with the real issues of the American Way of Life. It was unprecedented.

Not until the second issue was the “Shock SuspenStory” defined and so labeled, but the series was foreshadowed in the first issue with Feldstein’s “Yellow!” (illustrated by Jack Davis), “A War SuspenStory” about a WWII Army colonel who has his own son executed for desertion. “Yellow!” has striking parallels with the WWII execution of Private Eddie Slovik; the only American to be executed (on 31 January 1945) for desertion since the Civil War. William Bradford Huie told Slovik’s story in his book *The Execution of Private Slovik* (1954), filmed in 1973 as one of the best of the 1970s’ made-for-TV movies. “Yellow!” reveals just how close Feldstein and Gaines were to the temper of the times when they sat down to begin creating *Shock* stories, and it set the tone for the thought-provoking “message stories” that followed over the next few years in *Shock SuspenStories* and *Shock Illustrated*.

The Shock SuspenStory was characterized by a running theme of mob violence and an art style best described as Heightened Realism. A similarity can be noted between Wallace Wood’s dramatically effective *Shock* renderings (some of his best work) and the caricatures of corruptions in the fine art of Jack Levine, whose paintings of social commentary received a critical acclaim denied EC.

Because Hollywood was hampered by its Production Code, EC was often several steps ahead of the film industry. *Film noir* productions of the 1940s and 1950s took a cynical look at American life, but the widely advertised A-budget social realist “problem films” of that period were often copouts. Otto

Preminger’s highly touted *The Man with the Golden Arm* (1955) was so distorted that Nelson Algren, author of the original novel, commented, “I thought it was sort of comical. It had nothing to do with drug addiction.” Moviegoers had to wait for Andre de Toth’s more accurate *Monkey on My Back* (1957) about fighter Barney Ross (Cameron Mitchell).

Both films came after EC’s lingo-laden but starkly dramatized drug warning, “The Monkey” (*Shock SuspenStories* #12).

Donna Reed received one of the numerous Academy Awards won by the sanitized film version of James Jones’ *From Here to Eternity* (1953), but the Motion Picture Production Code obliterated almost any indication that she was portraying a prostitute. Elia Kazan hauled in the Oscars with *Gentleman’s Agreement* (1947), an attack on anti-Semitism, but all abrasiveness was smoothed over by the slick setting (“like an illustration for *Cosmopolitan*,” said Kazan in 1971) and a plot construction where the main character (Gregory Peck) is not actually a Jew but is only posing as one.

This type of approach was also prevalent in films about blacks. Both Kazan’s *Pinky* (1949) and Werker’s *Lost Boundaries* (1949) compromised their depictions of black America by the casting of white actors as blacks in stories about blacks “passing” as whites. Although *Lost Boundaries* was based on a true story, the casting and storylines in the 1949 wave of black films served to avoid or blur the real issues. *Home of the Brave* (1949), about a black’s



Lynn Bari in the Vincent Price starrer *Shock*, 1946.



psychological breakdown, ends on a note of contrived optimism. These three films all did excellent business in the then South (to both black and white audiences), but novelist Ralph Ellison observed that only MGM’s *Intruder in the Dust* (1949) “could be shown in Harlem without arousing unintentional laughter.”

While these films and others, along with radio/television dramas and newspapers, presented distortions, easy solutions, covered grit with gloss or ignored problems and injustices entirely, the alternative *Shock* view raised a mirror to reflect ordinary Americans reacting viciously to the slightest whisper of front porch innuendo before gathering under twilight streetlamps to become an animal mob. If some *Shock* stories seem preachy or appear to belabor the obvious today, remember that they had “the shock of the new” in the 1950s. That had also been the case with *Gentleman’s Agreement*, as Kazan later recalled, “Try to put yourself back in American films in 1946 where

the word 'Jew' was never mentioned before. For the first time someone said that America is full of anti-Semitism, both conscious and unconscious and among the best and most liberal people. That was a much bolder statement than it is now. In that sense the picture broke some new ground."

America's reluctance to look in the mirror is evident not only in "Shock Talk," the letters column of *Shock SuspenStories*, but also in the furor aroused by the seemingly peaceful American village folk transformed into a sadistic mob in Shirley Jackson's "The Lottery," a 1948 story that resulted in cancelled subscriptions and more mail than any other piece of fiction published in *The New Yorker* up until that time. Shirley Jackson received mail she "was downright scared to open" in the summer of 1948:

...of the 300-odd letters I received that summer I can count only 13 that spoke kindly to me, and they were mostly from friends.... Millions of people, and my mother, had taken a pronounced dislike to me.... Curiously, there are three main themes which dominate the letters of that first summer—three themes which might be identified as bewilderment, speculation and plain old-fashioned abuse. In the years since then, during which the story has been anthologized, dramatized, televised and even—in one completely mystifying transformation—made into a ballet, the tenor of the letters I receive has changed. I am addressed more politely, as a rule, and the letters largely confine themselves to questions like what does this story mean? The general tone of the early letters, however, was a kind of wide-eyed, shocked innocence. People at first were no so much concerned with what the story meant; what they wanted to know was where these lotteries were held, and whether they could go there and watch.

She wrote the above in 1960. Apparently, though, the allegory expressed in "The Lottery" is still too potent for some innocents. In the early 1970s, "The Lottery" was filmed by director Larry Yust (*Homebodies, The Secret Sharer*), who used a small California town as a location site (and locals as actors). This was made as part of the Encyclopaedia Britannica Educational Corporation's series for teaching classic short stories. In 1978, I discovered that Massachusetts Educational Television was carrying this series—with the exception of "The Lottery." When I inquired about this, I was told that MET board members had voted it out of their programming.

Fantasy/reality—EC had equal doses of both, and many innocent young comic book readers of the 1950s lost their innocence and gained an understanding of those times not at school but in the pages of *Two-Fisted Tales*, the *Shock* titles and *Mad*. Marie Winn, in "What Became of Childhood Innocence?" (*New York Times Magazine*, 25 January 1981),

Mad, was involved in a head-on collision with the real issues of American life that films were avoiding.

"Impact" read the blurb on the front cover, but perhaps there would have been more impact if the single *Shock SuspenStory* had not been buried among the genre tales. The interior label ("A Shock SuspenStory") was dropped in issue 9, but only in #16—two issues before the comic book collapsed—was there any attempt to push the *Shock* concept to fill an entire issue. It was an explosive burst, followed by this curious note of resignation in #17: "We racked our brains but couldn't come up with anything that we felt was worthy of following 'Blood Brothers' (#13), 'The Whipping' (#14), 'The Confidant' (#15), et al!" In two-and-a-half years there were less than 20 stories in the *Shock* category—leaving the impression that Gaines and Feldstein simply felt more comfortable burying their messages and social commentary in the satire/fantasy/SF/thriller genre context of the other EC titles.



after finding that "no single cultural force of the past 25 years better illustrates the changes that have occurred since those old days than *Mad*," continued with the inaccurate blanket statement that "the comics of earlier years" prior to *Mad* "all fell into the category of fantasy." But *Shock SuspenStories*, debuting seven months before



Jack Nicholson tears it up in *The Shining*, 1974.



SO I BOUGHT AN **AXE**...HEH, HEH...
AND TONIGHT I **WAITED** FOR HIM!
HE...HE'S **NOT SHREWD ANY-
MORE!** HE HASN'T GOT A **GOOD
HEAD ON HIS SHOULDERS
ANYMORE!**



I'VE GOT IT!



Eight months later, the debut issue of *Shock Illustrated* (Sep-Oct 1955) gave rise to the hope that a magazine format, removed from the watchful eyes of the Comics Code Authority, would make it possible for EC to tackle any controversial theme. Yet the subtitle ("Adult Psychoanalytical Tales") said otherwise. Rather than a revival and escalation of *Shock SuspenStories*, the subtitle, the opening editorial and the Jack Kamen art all made it clear this was a rebirth of EC's *Psychoanalysis*. But by the second issue that format was dropped with the switch to a different approach, as indicated by the subtitle—"Adult Crime Stories."

In the second and third issues, the art got an upgrade with the addition of Reed Crandall, George Evans, Graham Ingels, Al Williamson, Angelo Torres and painted covers by paperback illustrator Rudy Nappi (best known for his Hardy Boys/Nancy Drew cover art from 1953

until 1979). Nappi's striking covers hit exactly the right note, giving the magazine the look of a paperback book, but it served to disguise Picto-Fiction's problems. Magazine readers were not inclined to slide over quarters for an unfamiliar short story magazine with the names of unknown writers on the contents page. Having successfully adapted Ray Bradbury to comics, here was the ideal opportunity to branch out from that beginning and present the fiction of other writers—Alfred Bester, Vance Bourjaily, R.V. Cassill, William Faulkner, Patricia Highsmith, James Jones, Jack Kerouac, Arthur Miller, Mickey Spillane, Jim Thompson, Eudora Welty, Cornell Woolrich—but it instead became a missed opportunity. Picto-Fiction titles displaying such names on the front covers could have successfully sold to the same people who were purchasing paperbacks by the millions.

Further, comic book buyers resented

paying 25 cents for stories minus balloons and color, and readers who expected *Shock Illustrated* to bring back the message stories of *Shock SuspenStories* were also disappointed. For the first time in six years, EC appeared to be lacking confidence, circling in confusion near a precipice—and getting closer to the edge. 🐼

Bhob Stewart has scripted comics for several publishers (Marvel, Warren, Charlton, Byron Preiss) and contributed to numerous magazines, including Publishers Weekly, TV Guide and Heavy Metal. On the Internet, his Fusebox combines contemporary online comics with classic syndicated strips of the past [http://forums.delphiforums.com/bhob2]. His biography of Wally Wood was published in 2003 by TwoMorrows.

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Marketplace Mail

[continued from page 8]

involvement in the business of their work, and in the rewards from it, which led to much of what reshaped the field for the next three decades.

As a fallback, if there was a transitory Bronze Age, I'd argue for the beginning in January 1968, with the closely-timed releases of *Showcase #73* (the first new DC launch which couldn't have happened in the style of the Silver Age) and the first two of the new Marvel solo titles, *Captain America* and *Hulk*.

Separately, a note or two on Dan Johnson's piece on the DC mystery line. *The Witching Hour* was initially launched by editor Dick Giordano, not Murray Boltinoff, who inherited the title a couple of years later. Dick also launched *House of Secrets*, which is unclear from the article. Both Dick and Joe Orlando played pivotal roles in developing a new generation of talented writers and artists, as Dan discussed, while Murray preferred to stick with longer-established talents. *Ghosts*, for instance, was notable for the fact that it was almost entirely written by veteran Leo Dorfman until his death, creating stylistic consistency unlike any other DC mystery title. Best,

Paul Levitz
New York, NY

Special applause

Congratulations on a splendid September issue [#115] of *Comic Book Marketplace*. It was brilliantly conceived and produced. Of course, I am personally grateful for Michael Kronenberg's lavish and faithfully transcribed interview with me, but the really insightful piece on the great Harvey Kurtzman by Steve Ringgenberg deserves special applause.

Comic Book Marketplace is providing the comic book profession with a very much needed thoughtful introduction to the otherwise overlooked areas of the lives of the fields' most highly regarded practitioners. A very inspirational support for the young upcoming professionals.

My best wishes for your continuance.
Cordially,

Will Eisner
Tamarac, FL

Wow! Two in a row! First we get another great detailed letter from DC's Paul Levitz, and then, applause from none other than Will Eisner, himself! We are honored, to say the least! And getting feedback from these two giants of the industry will spur us onward and upward!

RC

Corrections

Typically I like to let my work speak for itself, and I'm fairly content to allow it to do just that without further clarification or noise on my part. However, I find myself in the position of not just having to explain one recent piece, but having to apologize profusely to all those involved—including but not necessarily limited to Russ and Angie and the rest of the fine folks at *Comic Book Marketplace* hq, and especially Ty, our great graphic designer, Ed Rock, and all of you, our readers—for an obvious blunder committed on my part in the pages of this very magazine.

I'm referring specifically to the "Inspiration Central" column featuring Ty Templeton which appeared in *CBM* #115, and which inexplicably featured a few pieces of Ty's superb art from a few issues of DC's *Batman Adventures* series...as well as the work of another artist—namely, George Broderick's fine delineations from his and Chris Yambar's *Suicide Blonde* very fine Sci-Fi graphic novel.

The fault was mine, utterly and completely. Somehow the art files from two different articles I was working on got intermixed during the e-mailing process, resulting in the misprint. I only offer this as an explanation, and not as any excuse. Like so many things in this life that don't quite turn out as well as we might have hoped, it all boils down to human error on my part.

I find myself both bewildered and

embarrassed by this mistake. And while I can't promise that it will never happen again—hey, I'm still capable of learning some lessons...eventually—I will promise that I will do my utmost to prevent any further similar instances in the future. [Note to self: Double checking things is good. Very, very good.]

I hope that this note helps clear up any confusion or damage of any kind that might have arisen due to my error, and goes a little way to setting things right. Best wishes from a very red faced,

Bill Baker
www.hypethis.com [home on the web]
www.worldfamouscomics.com/bakersdozen
[updated every Wednesday]

First off, let me thank you for putting out such a fine magazine. *Comic Book Marketplace* is the only comic-related book I buy. The format of the mag is great, I wouldn't change a thing.

I have been a modern day EC fan-addict since 1985 (thanks to Russ Cochran's EC Classics), and have been hunting down ECs and their pre-Code competition ever since. So naturally, I thought issue 112 was fantastic—the articles on the non-EC horror titles were relished and appreciated. Russ' letter from the editor was most enjoyable.

The Atlas horror article by Pat Calhoun was informative, and has given me some new titles and numbers to add to my want list. I find that Atlas horror titles could be hit or miss story-wise, but their covers usually made up for any shortcomings inside.

Steve Kronenberg's enthusiasm for the "Brand X" horror covers was nice to see, but as I'm sure others have probably pointed out already, he has some of his facts awry. He credits *Black Cat Mystery* #42's cover artist as Joe Simon and *Black Cat Mystery* #41's artist as Al Avison, but clearly the same artist did both. Compare the face in the bottom right hand corner of #42 to the man's face on #41 (most of this artist's male

[continued on page 76]

Weird Words

[continued from page 24]
with follow ups in *Strange Worlds* #1 and #2. This act of homage to Robert E. Howard's Conan is easily spotted off the git as Crom was the "heathen god" that Conan paid tribute to when he'd vocalize passionate determination by shouting "By Crom!" in the heat of battle. With art by John Giunta and Fox's facility with the genre the three Crom yarns are quite good, but maintaining regular titles with continuing characters was not Avon's strong suit, as many of their books were a series of "one-shots" in almost every imaginable genre.

It should be noted that the first two Crom stories became part of a unique crossover as coverless copies of *Out of This World* and *Strange Worlds* #1 were bound into the middles of the two issues of Avon's SF pulp also titled *Out of This World*, as comics finally—however briefly—circled back into the pulps. Thus Crom—harking back to that *Weird Tales* with the Conan cover that shared the stands with *Famous Funnies* #1—makes a fitting endpoint for this short look at the enormity and various aspects of pulp influences upon comic books. 🐉

Inspiration Central: Ron Garney

[continued from page 16]
with my own work, and I try new things all the time, based on what I think the character needs, or based on my own need to stay enthused, you know? I guess if I were to apply that principle on my everyday life outside of comics, I think that's just my personality type. I tend to have a lot of interests. I like to play sports, I work out, I do this, do that, and I'm into music.

I'm really not a one trick pony, and it either works to your advantage or not. There's other guys who stick to one style and push it to its ultimate potential and stay with that, and that becomes them. I've never really been [like that]. I guess I'm an under-achiever, and yet an over-achiever at the same time, because I like

so many different things. But I tend to not bring one particular style to its ultimate potential. I don't know if that's a good thing or a bad thing. I don't know if it's either, it just is.

CBM: I also get a sense from looking at the progression of your work that you're also kind of challenging yourself—that you're looking for that next challenge to push yourself to the next level.

Garney: Yeah, that's true. When I was young, if I got bored with a class [I'd draw]. I think that's what kind of made me get interested in drawing, it was sort of escapism. Because a lot of the time, whether it be math or English, it came fairly easy enough that I never really had to work too hard at it, so I'd get bored with it quick. And that became an unfortunate habit, maybe, that if I start getting bored with something I need to find something new to restart my engines about it, you know, whether it be drawing or whatever.

I can remember being more like that in my first six or seven years of my career. I don't think I'm as much like that now. I'm more comfortable just drawing the way things come out of me, and a lot of times that just works best. I don't try to overthink it anymore. I used to overthink it too much. It was easy to get into the trap of looking at Frank Miller's work, or whoever, and just go, "Wow, I really need to be Frank Miller today. I love what he did here on this page, so I'm going to try that today!" And it's easy to get into that, but the problem is that you never become them, and it's almost madness to try that because you will just never be them.

And this kind of alludes to what I was saying before; that you have to eventually give in to yourself, and do what comes out of you naturally, and be happy with that. And just appreciate other artistic styles for what they are, and just appreciate the differences without trying to ape them or be them—because you never will be. 🐉

Comic Book MARKETPLACE

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by Michael Naiman

The Michael Naiman Report

A Disney medley

The comic collecting bizniz could see a return of the investor-types into the marketplace due to a possible slow down in the market. With a possible weakening economy on the horizon due in part to escalating oil prices, the collectibles market could (again) be a perceived short term haven for those looking to protect their money.

Of course, we've seen this cycle many times in the recent past. In stampede the unknowledgeable "collectors/specu-leaches" who have been convinced that "9.4s" are a lock to gain in value—no matter what. And, in the end when it is time to sell, the grim reality strikes—yet again! What you buy it for is not necessarily what you can "quick-sell" it for! This isn't the stock market me-buckos! My guess is that those 1970s issues will probably be the memorabilia that this latest group of *The Great Unknowledgeable* will be looking to scoop up. Break out the *Hulk* #181s!

Crossover collecting is becoming more popular every day in our hobby. Once you've "completed" your runs and paid for your stash of "keys," the urge to look at related collectibles can be overpowering. In recent years, I've been looking at the enormous run of *Four Color* issues and have pulled out a few of my favorite Non-Duck (Gasp! Can it Be?) Disney comics and looked for their kindred toy cousins.

My comics are not NM so I have no

hesitation in making a display grouping of some of my favorite comics and toys. Here's a suggestion (and some current sales prices) on some of the more interesting Disney crossover collectibles.

Everyone sing! "*Out of the night when the full moon is bright, comes the horseman known as Zorro!*" One of my all time favorite Disney shows! So, naturally you gotta have: The first TV Disney Zorro issue (FC #882) currently *Guides* for FN \$51 and NM- \$240; and to go along with the comic, what about the GUND Zorro 10 inch hand puppet \$35; MARX 54mm Sgt. Garcia \$39, Don Alejandro and Don Diego \$20 each; and the MARX Zorro and Toronado (with box) \$280.

"*Born on a mountain top in Tennessee. Greenest state in the land of the free.*" No, not Bob Overstreet—Davy Crockett! There was no bigger marketing bonanza in the mid-fifties than the Coonskin Crusader! What kid didn't have a faux coonskin cap? In fact, I just picked up the Disney collectors edition DVD of all the *Davy Crockett* episodes. A must have for the hardcore Boomer. Try putting these items together: MARX Disney play set of The Alamo complete with Fess Parker pictures, box and instructions \$225; MARX also put out a non-Disney Alamo play set, which if found complete with all figures and box can set you back \$1235; a Davy Crockett Indian pipe made of wood \$31 (little did

your parents know what these would be used for when one went away to college in the late '60s!); Davy Crockett TIMEX watch in original box circa 1955/56 \$77; the *Four Color* edition #631 made its debut in May of 1955 with a Fess Parker photo cover—today the *Guide* rates this at FN \$63 and NM- \$285.

"*Zip a dee do dah, zip a dee ay, My oh my, what a wonderful day.*" *Song of the South* remains one of those Disney classics that for PC reasons continues to be held back from the American market reissue. For those of you not familiar with the story, African-American Uncle Remus draws upon his tales of Brer Rabbit to help little Johnny deal with his confusion over his parents' separation as well as his new life on the plantation. This 94 minute movie can be obtained in many forms—a 16mm film recently sold for \$620; a laserdisc (1985) from Japan (with Japanese sub-titles) \$170; a VHS UK edition (1983) went for \$75. One of the biggest selling points for *Song of the South* was the toy market. With all the children enthralled with yet another animated creation from Walt Disney, numerous items were produced depicting Brer Rabbit, Fox and Bear. There are of course the Disneykins, available for anywhere from \$20-\$50 each (with box); the rare 1947 pinball-style game made mostly from wood parts with seven marbles; then there were the giveaways which included the 16-page self-covered

A report of market indicator sales (including % of Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide) by Michael Naiman



Amazing Spider-Man

#1	GD	"\$1175"	69%
#2	VG	\$500	83%
#3	VG	\$520	1.2X
#4	VG	\$460	1.21
#5	VG	\$320	1.02X
#13	FN+	\$265	1.47X
#14	GD	\$169	Guide
#18	NM-	\$495	66%
#22	FN+	\$77	88%
#24	VF	\$200	1.02X
#25	VF+	\$260	1.12X
#26	VF+	\$273	1.10X
#27	FN+	\$128	1.33X
#28	VF	\$454	99%
#29	VF+	\$171	1.12X
#30	VF-	\$125	82%
#31	VF+	\$214	1.28X
#40	VF/NM	\$450	1.05X
#50	VF	\$455	1.09X
#121	NM-	\$325	1.3X
#129	NM-	\$325	81%

Avengers

#1	GD	\$265	1.09X
#2	VF+	\$510	Guide
#3	FN+	\$177	1.43X
#4	VG	\$286	Guide
#5	VF-	\$96	46%
#6	VF+	\$202	1.26X
#7	FN+	\$62	69%
#8	VF+	\$165	1.03X
#9	VF+	\$200	95%
#10	VF/NM	\$151	71%

Batman

#2	GD	\$950	78%
#4	GD	\$405	61%
#5	GD	\$290	62%

#17	VF	"\$1000"	74%
#29	VG	\$205	67%
#40	FN	\$354	78%
#42	VG	\$280	1.09X
#56	FN	\$195	83%
#63	VG	\$140	94%
#72	FN	\$166	90%
#88	VG	\$100	86%

Captain America

#100	FN	\$62	66%
#100	NM	\$380	84%
#101	FN	\$20	74%
#104	NM	\$134	1.67X
#108	NM	\$53	82%
#109	NM	\$114	1.14X
#109	VF	\$40	53%
#110	VF	\$60	55%
#112	VF/NM	\$30	75%
#115	VF/NM	\$28	Guide
#120	VF	\$15	83%
#122	VF/NM	\$10	63%
#133	VF	\$8	75%
#134	VF-	\$7	58%

Conan

#1	NM	\$360	1.2X
#4	FN	\$75	76%
#4	VF	\$225	94%
#5	VF	\$153	78%
#6	VF	\$110	89%
#7	VF	\$170	52%
#8	NM	\$170	81%
#8	VF	\$75	69%
#9	VF/NM	\$102	63%
#10	VF/NM	\$80	50%
#13	VF	\$52	80%
#16	VF/NM	\$130	Guide
#17	VF	\$52	60%

#18	NM-	\$66	60%
#19	NM-	\$75	88%
#20	NM-	\$66	78%
#22	NM-	\$58	89%
#28	FN	\$9	50%
#31	NM-	\$42	84%
#42	VF	\$18	67%
#43	VF	\$33	91%
#45	VF/NM	\$31	86%

Defenders

#1	NM	\$128	94%
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Doctor Strange

#169	VF+	\$58	56%
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Eternals

#1	NM-	\$10	50%
#3	NM-	\$4	50%
#10	NM-	\$4	50%

Exciting

#14	FN	\$160	84%
#30	VG	\$100	86%

Exciting Romances

#7	VG	\$10	63%
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Exciting War

#7	FN	\$15	83%
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Fantastic Four

#2	VG	\$365	60%
#3	FN	\$525	85%
#3	VG	\$420	1.02X
#4	GD	\$188	82%
#5	GD	\$240	78%
#6	VG	\$225	88%
#13	FN	\$122	87%

#15	VF	\$200	79%
#19	FN	\$85	81%
#26	VF/NM	\$325	58%
#33	FN	\$27	69%
#42	VF/NM	\$68	68%
#52	FN	\$60	91%

FF Annual

#1	VF-	\$310	55%
#2	FN+	\$196	1.76X
#3	VF	\$102	88%

Green Lantern

#4	FN	\$63	66%
#5	VF	\$193	83%
#11	FN	\$36	67%
#24	VF	\$65	69%

#29	NM-	\$105	58%
#33	VF/NM	\$87	76%
#36	FN	\$20	61%
#41	FN	\$15	56%
#45	VF	\$95	91%
#48	VF	\$50	77%

Hulk

#102	VF-	\$87	51%
#104	FN	\$20	66%
#105	VF/NM	\$55	74%

JIM

#85	VF	\$425	75%
#86	FN+	\$244	1.66X

JLA

#2	FN+	\$165	77%
#3	FN+	\$169	79%
#4	FN+	\$86	65%
#9	VF	\$200	72%
#11	FN+	\$45	68%

#14	FN+	\$50	75%
#25	VF	\$65	66%
#26	FN	\$30	71%
#31	VF	\$75	91%
#32	VF/NM	\$80	83%

MAD

#2	GD	\$365	2.58X
#3	GD	\$230	2.67X
#5	GD	\$263	1.75X
#6	VG	\$255	2.09X
#7	VG	\$153	1.25X
#23	GD	\$51	1.3X

Strange Tales

#101	VG+	\$129	75%
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Superman

#120	FN	\$75	69%
#127	FN	\$55	59%
#136	FN	\$60	83%
#145	FN	\$40	66%
#153	VF	\$60	86%
#159	FN	\$19	63%
#166	FN	\$18	75%
#174	FN	\$19	79%
#178	VF	\$40	72%
#180	VF	\$44	80%

Tales To Astonish

#27	VG	\$380	66%
#35	GD	\$53	39%
#39	VF-	\$155	58%

X-Men

#2	VG+	\$320	1.05X
#3	FN+	\$280	1.37X
#5	FN+	\$225	1.47X

Wheaties Comic D-4 (1951) FN \$18 and NM- \$45; *A Kite Tail*, Southern California Edison's 14-pager from 1955 FN \$103 and NM- \$300; and the American Dairy Farmers *Ice Cream for the Party* 14-page comic published in 1955 which is not listed in the *Guide*.

For vinyl fans there's the Capital recording from 1947 featuring three 78 rpm records in a book style set for children featuring Johnny Mercer and the Pied Pipers with Uncle Remus (James Baskett) and the original cast. This can be found for between \$30-75 depending

on condition. The *Four Color* edition of *Song of the South* (FC #129) runs FN \$87 and NM- \$400. A very difficult issue to find in high grade!

More comics and crossovers in the next issue! 



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We had a slight lull in the mid summer and managed to take two much needed weeks off. Otherwise the last few months were busier than the usual summer for us. We are back into the swing of things, getting requests for just about anything and everything. Almost all buyers find us from our website and are amazed at the selection. Unlike most other dealers, we go out of our way to restock almost *all* comics, by *all* publishers in the \$2-\$25 price range from the 1960-2000 era. We do *not* depend on buying collections at 10 cents a book to restock \$3 titles and often pay 50 cents to \$1.50 to do so. The buyers who put some sort of value to their time realize the hard work we do and reward us with many orders. Collectors tend to bargain hunt what they can elsewhere, and then come to us to fill in all the gaps. One cannot successfully and cheaply buy single issues needed off eBay (once shipping is added) at low prices. It is a daily occurrence for us to sell 10, 50 and 100 comic batches to collectors and readers alike.

Due to my persuasion, I managed to get Richard Comely to finally publish the unpublished *Captain Canuck* #15 that was finished and due way back in 1981. Rumors have circulated for years about this book and I have asked many

times. Richard showed me dummy photocopies years back, so I knew the work existed. So a US \$15 cover price Limited Edition, signed by Comely and serially numbered to only 150 copies was finally printed. This is the original and most popular version of Captain Canuck, the Tom Evans character, by the original creators, Richard Comely, George Freeman and Jean Claude St. Aubin. I bought 50% of the 150 copy print run and Richard split the rest between himself and the creators. Between my website, regulars and eBay, I sold half my copies in the first month. We also sold many copies of the *New Original Captain Canuck* #1-A and #1-B (2/2004, Matrix Comics Pub) Ashcans by Mark Shainblum and Sandy Carruthers. And due anytime now is the *New Captain Canuck Unholy War* three-part direct market mini-series by Riel and Drue Langlois. I think Americans underestimate how popular this series was up here in Canada. A good year for Canuck fans.

We sold a large three-box amount of Archies from the 1950s and 1960s to a single collector. Plus other buyers are still buying them up through the 1970s at a good pace too. We most certainly have the world's best selection with over 25,000 in stock, and selection is the main reason we move so many. Far and away the best selling title in the last year has been *Betty & Veronica*. The super-hero issues in *Pep* #150-160 and *Laugh* #127-144 are way up in demand and difficult to restock, as fans try to complete their super-hero issue sets.

These rare Charlton Comic Digests are now recently listed in the *Guide* (after the regular titles): *Barney & Betty*, *Flintstones* and *Yogi Bear*. These titles are *not* listed in the *Guide*, but we have

had them and they are now confirmed to exist: *Bugs Bunny* (1971), *The Jetsons* (1973), *Pebbles and Bamm-Bamm* (Teen-Age, Charlton 1973), *Road Runner* (1971) #63-2970, *Scooby Doo* (1976), *Woody Woodpecker* (1971) #63-3020. They are mostly around 100 pages, in B&W, and contain short one-page gag comics. All appear to be new material. They are variously published by Charlton, Xerox, Now Age Books, Ottenheimer and Pendulum Pub., but are obviously all related and in the same format, with 60 to 75 cent original cover prices. They are scarce to rare, with most having eluded *Guide* listing all these years. I have been selling G to FN copies in the \$15 to \$50 price ranges, as I am able to locate them.

I have been contacted by someone who has an unread set of the very rare *Elflore* #1-15 (Nightwind Productions, Barry Blair 6/1980-1982). It might come as news to many out there, but Barry Blair has quite a big fan following. I advised him to CGC grade the early issues and sell it as a full set, if the day comes when he is ready to sell. Mid-grade copies of #1 have been known to sell in the \$200 range unslabbed on eBay. Most of the other issues rarely appear at all in any grade. These make *Cerebus* and *TMNT* #1s look common. It would be interesting to see what these would bring.

We sold a larger amount than usual of the higher numbered *Justice League* over #180 thru to #261, especially the Perez and JSA issues. Also up in demand are other late Bronze DC's like *Wonder Woman* #300-329, *Flash* #320-350 (especially the Trial of Flash issues), *All-Star Squadron* and other titles. All 1980-1985 era DC and Marvel late-Bronze Age comics remain very undervalued,

when compared to their 1976-1979 era counterparts. Investors would be advised to buy up the high grade copies they can still get cheap before it is too late. Hard to believe, but only eight years ago, almost all 1970s comics were very low priced, but many have risen tenfold or more in that short period.

It seems the main theme of collectors in the last few months has been for Bronze Age horror comics. I suppose there is a spreading feeling that they are undervalued and might be the next HOT thing in comics. Bronze Age super-hero comics are still very strong sellers, but have waned a bit in favor of more demand for horror. Thus they will be the main focus of the rest of this report.

In the last few months we have sold a lot of Charlton comics, with about 2/3 of them being horror and SF titles. They are selling in all grades, but in the last while the demand for VF or better copies has almost tripled. While the 1950s and 1960s titles sported notable sales, the real demand has been for the issues from 1970-1986 era. The 1984-1986 era Charltons all had small print runs, which is the main reason buyers go beyond the 1980 mark. So it is the Bronze issues that are gaining demand. Especially popular are those issues with Ditko, Sutton, Newton, Zeck, Wayne Howard, etc. With all the Ditko listings on Charlton in the *Guide*, one would think that they are all documented. When I started going through contents to sell these books, I found as many as a dozen unlisted Ditko issues in a single title. *Haunted* #21 up (the Baron Weirwolf issues) are fast growing in demand. *Haunted* #37 is the Fiendish Females issue, a cool oddball item. *Charlton Bullseye* (the color comics series) had unpublished new material scheduled for #11 up, that ended up being published in *Scary Tales* #37 up (a fact unknown to most collectors). *Many Ghosts of Dr Graves* #54 has an early John Byrne cover from 12/1975 and is one of his toughest early newsstand comics to locate. Many buyers like the classic Wood-like art by Wayne Howard, with *Midnight Tales* being perhaps his most

prominent and best title.

Gold Key horror titles have started to sell again, including: *Boris Karloff*, *Grimm's Ghost*, *Occult Files of Dr Spector*, *Ripley's Believe it or Not* and *Twilight Zone*.

Black Hole (Walt Disney) #4 turns out to be unlisted, as a sold *only* in pre-packs low print run Whitman and remains elusive and very undervalued. *Twilight Zone* (Gold Key) #83 and 84 are 52-page Giants, with lower print runs and in high demand. But #84 is the first Frank Miller pro work in comics and is ready to explode in price. The #85 is very overlooked as the second pro Frank Miller art. I am finally ready to declare that *Porky Pig* #99 does not exist and needs to be removed from the *Guide*. Almost all the other scarce 8-12/1980 Whitmans now have 5-10 or more copies so far CGC graded. Many collectors, after years of eBay and other extensive searching, have not been able to surface a single copy in any grade. This probably leaves *Little Lulu* #260 and *Super Goof* #61 as among the rarest *known* copies.

After all these years I saw scans of the cover and interiors of *Marvel Comics Super Special* #7 Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band. It exists in a French language, printed in France edition. Other editions of #7 rumored to exist, but *not* confirmed include: Canadian French language edition, Spanish language (Latin America or Spain?), and Japanese language edition. This is a book that will drive Marvel completists insane, as I have never seen one for sale. *Weird Wonder Tales* (Marvel) #22 has a Dr. Druid story with a new framing sequence with art by Novak/Tagtag/John Byrne, not yet noted in the *Guide* and a must for completists. All Bronze Marvel horror (from *Beware to Werewolf by Night*) in strict VF or better, but especially VF/NM or better, have shown growing demand.

Warren magazines have been selling quite well for a few years now. Since CGC started slabbing them, demand for high grade copies has doubled. I have located some very high grade copies in the 9.0 to 9.6 range and have been

getting well over *Guide* for these beautiful (unslabbed) books. They are more difficult to find than one would expect in these grades. *Many* of the copies on the market are ex-Warren-Warehouse copies, which typically are unread, but because they were handled and not bagged, are typically in the VG/FN to FN/VF range. *Eerie* #17, due to dull factory blade, has most existing copies with ripped rather than cut interior corners, especially at upper and lower right interior corners. This book has been bringing high multiples of *Guide* in ordinary middle grades, and higher grade copies very rarely hit the market. It remains one of the scarcest Warrens as it was one of the first issues to sell out in the Warren back issue department. Thus I shudder to think what a CGC 9.4 copy would bring if one ever surfaces (currently FN 6.0 is the highest graded CGC copy).

Some cool items we recently sold, not in *Guide* and not often seen: Berni Wrightson Catalog NYCA Gallery Oct. 1977 (NYCA Art Gallery Pub, comic size, 20 pages including cover; B&W with stiff color covers, catalogue/program for the 10/1977 exhibition) VF \$20; *Big Apple Comic* #1 (1975, underground comic, Wally Wood-c/a, Severin, Reese, Ploog and Weiss art, Williamson-a) VF \$20.

Above everything else, the demand for DC horror comics of the 1968-1983 era has risen exponentially. They have always sold decent and steadily, normally in the GD thru FN ranges, but usually not in the HOT category. They have finally reached that status for us. The big difference is that the investors have started to buy them up in higher grades. As these are not usually found in CGC copies, realistic buyers have decided on wanting 1968-1972 in VF, with 1973-1976 in VF+ and 1977-1983 copies in VF/NM or better. I have been raising my buy prices on these and have landed some nice copies. This produced more sales and yet more demand. Some of the 1968-1972 era issues might explode in price by next summer. *House of Secrets* #81

and *House of Mystery* #174 are now viewed as major key issues (akin to #1s), yet list at less than 1/3 the price of *Weird War* #1. They are quite scarce in high grades and will not surface on the market, at current low *Guide* values. *HOS* #82-100 and *HOM* #175-200 are due for big price increases too, with greats like Adams, Wrightson, Toth and others. All the DC horror from any year with Wrightson covers, stories, and even single splash pages are by far the most requested issues. Most unusual is the demand for 1977-1983 issues. It turns out most copies on the market are in VG to FN/VF, thus many are now looking for those difficult to find VF/NM or better copies. Many have told me their local shops do not even have mid-grade copies in stock any more. The 1977-1983 issues remain quite inexpensive, but might not in the coming years if demand continues to climb. All titles are selling also, including: *Ghosts*, *Secrets of Haunted House*, *Secrets of Sinister House*, *Tales of Ghost Castle*, *Forbidden Tales of Dark Mansion*, *Weird War*, *Weird Mystery*, *Witching Hour*, etc. *Weird War* has been growing in demand, especially these issues, which can now be considered hot and are still very undervalued: #64 (Frank Miller's first work at DC), 68 (second Frank Miller), 93 (first app and origin Creature Commandos), 94 (first return of War that Time Forgot-c/s, with dinosaurs), 100 (Creature Commandos invade the War that Time Forgot), 101 (first app and origin G.I. Robot-c/s, by Kanigher), 124 (last issue, 6/1983). Also selling again is *Doorway to Nightmare* with Madame Xanadu and those great Kaluta covers. Look for the popular *Ghosts* #97-99 with a Spectre story in each.

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Comics have been really moving out the door lately. I just got back from the L.A. monthly show. You can always count on the latest hot item to sell at this show. While at times dealers can be

reluctant to sell in bulk, it is worth the drive to see the latest in comics, toys and questionable adult material. Why they let the smut peddlers into this show is something that should be examined. I thought that comics were supposed to be good clean fun?!

Some of my sales at the show: *Amazing Adventures* #7 NM \$150, #18 M (PERFECT) \$400; *Avengers* #6 VF \$175; Dell Tarzans sold great (over 40 issues sold). High grade Marvels have been selling well! There's a news flash, eh? Anything but high grade, expect a significant discount "the most collected publisher" ever. (Hey, I sound like Comic Book Guy?!)

Sales: *Hulk* #6 VG+ \$50; *JLA* #1 FN \$700; *Luke Cage* #15 NM \$25; *Man Thing* #1 NM+ \$217; *Marvel Premier* #25 NM \$25; *Marvel Team-up* #53 NM \$53; *Monster Frankenstein* #3 NM \$37; *Showcase* #22 VG \$740; *Unknown Worlds* #6 NM \$31.

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The last couple of months have been a whirlwind of activity, with many items bought, sold and traded. The most exciting event was the acquisition of many Golden Age books from a local collection, which the seller had inherited from his grandfather who collected many titles in the late thirties and early forties. Due to the gorgeous bright colors and white pages, I decided to keep most of them for my own collection. However, for the relative handful I decided to sell, in an effort to recoup costs, there was an eager market awaiting: *Action Comics* #45 FR \$120, #78 FR- \$50; *All Star* #8 (first Wonder Woman) VG \$4525, #43 VG \$312; *Batman* #39 VG+ \$275; *Captain America Comics* #40 VG \$500; *Detective* #91 VG \$212; *Marvel Mystery*

#44 VG- \$375, #54 VG- \$312; *More Fun* #73 (1st Aquaman and Green Arrow) VG+ \$1550; *Star Spangled Comics* #2 GD/VG \$170; *Sub-Mariner Comics* #12 missing centerfold otherwise VG- \$172; *Superman* #49 VG- \$125; *Wonder Woman* #31 FN \$180; *World's Finest* #14 missing page otherwise VG \$110.

I also sold some assorted Silver, Bronze and Pre-Code Comics, with these being some of the highlights: *Amazing Spider-Man* #46 FN \$411, #50 VG \$46, #54 VF \$30, #95 VF/VF+ \$45, #100 VF \$88, #111 VF \$24, #122 VG \$37, #129 VG \$62, #158 NM+ \$26; *Baffling Mysteries* #17 VG/FN \$71; *Beware* #12 (1954) VG \$62; *Comics Novel* #1 (Anarcho Dictator Of Death) GD/VG \$80; *Conan* #3 FN \$30; *Iron Man & Sub-Mariner* #1 FN \$48; *Journey Into Fear* #8 VG+ \$63; *Marvel Two In One* #1 NM- \$43.

Of course, the slabbed books remain popular: *Eternal Warrior* #1 Gold "Flat Variant" CGC 9.4 \$120; *Magnus Robot Fighter* #12 CGC 9.4 \$60; *Marvel Super-Heroes* #1 (1966 1-shot) CGC 9.2 \$135; *Marvel Super-Heroes Secret Wars* #8 CGC 9.6 \$70; *Rai* #1 CGC 9.8 \$86; *Shadowman* #1 CGC 9.8 \$70.

Valiant comics are continuing to receive increasing interest, with a few of the premium editions finding new homes lately: *Archer & Armstrong* #0 Gold \$40; *Eternal Warrior* #1 Gold "Flat Variant" \$30; *Unity* #1 Gold \$30.

Comic production art continues to be in high demand, especially with those whom we trade with! But these are solely the cash sales of late: *Action Comics* #415 Hand-Colored Cover \$200; *Black Magic* #2 Hand-Colored Cover and Approval Cover \$280; *Captain Marvel* Cover Rough Gil Kane signed \$100; *Fantasy Masterpieces* #5 Cover Four-Color Separation \$225, #11 Cover Four-Color Separation \$175; *Fightin' Army* #59 Hand-Colored Cover and Color Sep \$175; *Forbidden Tales Of Dark Mansion* #12 Hand-Colored Cover and Approval Cover \$240; *The Flintstones* complete 8-page story (1970s) \$300; *G. I. Combat* #132 Approval Cover \$135, #137 Approval

Cover signed Russ Heath \$200; Green Lantern sketch signed Mart Nodell \$75; *House Of Mystery* #211 "full wrap" Cover Proof signed Bernie Wrightson \$150; *House Of Secrets* #84 Approval Cover signed Adams \$175; *Invasion* #2 full-page Splash McFarlane/Russell \$200; *Megalith* #2 Neal Adams/Texiera (1989) \$175; *Mighty Marvel Western* #29 "full wrap" Cover Proof \$77; *Our Fighting Forces* #117 Jack Abel Action page (1968) \$100, #172 Title Page (1976) \$100; *Rawhide Kid* #75 Title Page and Final Page (Lieber) \$150 apiece; *Spidey Super Stories* 1977 Win Mortimer Dr. Doom page \$125; *Superboy* #186 Hand-Colored Cover autographed Jack Adler \$190; *Super DC Giant* #S-20 (*House Of Mystery*) Approval Cover signed Neal Adams \$240; *Superman* #246 Hand-Colored Cover \$200; *Superman's Pal Jimmy Olsen* #137 Approval Cover \$150; *Swamp Thing* #10 Approval Cover \$150; *Sword Of Sorcery* #5 Approval Cover signed Walt Simonson \$150; *The Unexpected* #121 Approval Cover signed Neal Adams \$165, #122 Approval Cover \$150.

It is worth noting that the DC cover pieces mentioned above are all cash sales from the Jack Adler Collection, (which is particularly easy to trade and helps us to acquire lots of vintage comics and art each month!).

Well, duty calls, so I better run for now. 'Till next time: Keep on collectin'!

Jamie Newbold

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We are re-entering the fire season that plagued our city last year at this time. It's hot, dry and rain-less since April. On the plus-side it's dry and hot without torrential rains. My Florida in-laws can appreciate that. Now, business is limping along through the month of September, a traditionally slow month for us. Our

soldier customers continue to float in and out of the store and the country as they deploy and return from duty. I find myself watching the news more often for the names of soldiers wounded or killed in combat. Camp Pendleton is a large Marine Corps base near here and is home for many of the marines deployed to Iraq. We have marines and sailors from several bases as customers and wish them all good luck.

Silver/Bronze Age Marvels peaked this month with a flock of great sales to a wide range of customers. We recorded a sample of higher grade material for this article. The sample only reflects a small portion of two-month's worth of store sales. We did not list the hundreds of lower grade Marvels that sold. Most sold at or within 30% of *Guide* prices. The highest grade Marvels, NM or better, sell for about 20% over the *Guide*'s 9.2 category. Strangely enough, we move non-CGCd comics more effectively through our store than similar CGC copies. Often the CGC equivalent is more expensive to offset the initial cost of their fee per book submitted. Conversely, we sell CGC comics on-line with great profit against similar that are not slabbed and sell for less. Sometimes much less.

On another note, Marvel's decision to create more spinoff stories for the X-Men characters has produced mediocre results. Most of the new books that are offered can be broken down into three sales categories at our store. The first category includes the books that sell over 35 copies of a particular title. The second category features books that sell between 15 to 35 copies of a title, and the third is for the titles selling less than 15 copies for individual books.

In the first category are *Astonishing X-Men*, *Uncanny X-Men* and *X-Men: The End*. Of these three titles, only *Astonishing X-Men* sells in impressive numbers, easily selling over double the number of copies of the other two titles. This is the only X book that competes with the popular titles of DC such as *Superman/Batman* and *Superman*. In the second category are the following books:

X-Men, *Wolverine*, *X-Force* and *Excalibur*. Other than *X-Men*, most of these titles sell roughly 20 copies. The surprising part is that *X-Men*, one of the central longstanding books among the X titles falls into this category. Even with an artist on board that is popular among readers, many customers that purchase other X titles continue to avoid this one, often mentioning the storyline as a reason for their decision. Vertigo titles such as *Fables* and *Y-the Last Man* continue to consistently sell in larger numbers than several of these titles. Added to the sales of the individual copies of these two Vertigo titles is the enormous demand for the trade paperbacks reprinting the issues missed by customers. In a single year one of the Vertigo titles will sell triple the number of trades that all the second category X titles will. The third category includes *X-Men Unlimited*, *Cable/Deadpool*, *Mystique*, *New X-Men*, *Nightcrawler*, *Gambit*, *Rogue*, *District X* and *Exiles*. Most of these titles offer stories of individual characters that simply do not have a following strong enough to build a title that can sell in the numbers of the books featuring stories with groups of X-Men. Marvel's X-pansion is not shaking up comic sales at our store.

Golden Age: *Batman* #22 CGC 7.5 (Rockford Collection) \$1200; *Daring Mystery* #8 FA \$150; *Marvel Mystery Comics* #76 CGC 6.5 \$425; *Nickel Comics* #8 FA \$50; *Pep Comics* #21 FA \$45.

Silver Age: *Amazing Spider-Man* #29 FN+ \$95, #59 NM \$80, #78 VF/NM \$74, #83 NM- \$95, #95 NM- \$95; *Avengers* #1 VG \$500, #4 G/VG \$215, #11 FN \$78, #71 NM- \$75, #86 NM \$50; *Captain America* #100 F/VF \$195; *Daredevil* #9 FN \$45, #10 VF \$115, #14 VF \$52, #28 VF \$38, #30 VF \$38, #67 NM \$30; *Flash* #175 FN+ \$70; *Hulk* #2 GD \$240; *Incredible Hulk* #102 VF/NM \$247; *Iron Man* #1 F/VF \$195, #11 VF/NM \$48, #15 VF/NM \$48; *Journey Into Mystery* #111 F/VF \$60; *Justice League of America* #2 VG/F \$160, #6 FN+ \$112, #13 FN \$60; *Showcase* #22 FN \$1023; *Strange Adventures* #126 VF-

\$100; *Submariner* #35 NM \$75; *Thor* #134 VF \$55; *Wonder Woman* #124 FN+ \$54, #129 FN \$35; *World's Finest* #198 VF \$60, #199 VF/NM \$85, #12 VG/F \$95, #35 VF- \$120, #42 FN \$24; *X-Men* #1 CGC 3.5 \$950.

Bronze Age: *Amazing Spider-Man* #112 NM \$80, #114 NM \$80, #117 NM \$80, #119 VF/NM \$78, #121 VF/NM \$300, #123 VF \$33, #125 NM \$75, #137 NM- \$80; *Daredevil* #158 NM \$160, #160 NM \$40; *Defenders* #10 VF \$35; *Giant-Size X-Men* #1 FN+ \$302; *Iron Fist* #1 VF/NM \$48, #14 VF \$75, #15 VF \$38; *Marvel Team-Up* #6 NM \$24; *Teen Titans* #50 NM- \$20; *X-Men* #95 F/VF \$95, #103 VF/NM \$59, #105 VF/NM \$59, #131 CGC 9.0 \$40, #137 NM \$50, #139 CGC 9.4 \$75, #140 NM \$35, #142 NM \$50.

Modern Comics: *Amazing Spider-Man* #298 VF/NM \$27, #300 FN \$30; *G.I. Joe* (Marvel) #21 VF \$30; *Ultimate Spider-Man* #2 NM \$50, #4 NM \$35, #6 VF/NM \$25.

Terry's Comics

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We set up at two shows in the late summer. The first was the local Philadelphia show on August 1st. This show has been running for many years at the same location, the Holiday Inn on Packer Avenue in South Philly. Located in the Sports Arena area of town near the Walt Whitman Bridge, this show is run with expert ability by show promoter Derek Woywood, and is a local favorite attended by all die-hard fans from the tri-state area and beyond. Sales at this show are steady and you never know what

Golden Age treasures are going to walk in the door. I almost always manage to pick up some interesting material here. This show is also attended by many local dealers of vintage comics that you will not find at any other shows, and is thus highly recommended. The show is a breeze to get to and its great location and ease of parking are added pluses.

The second show in August was Wizard World Chicago, which ran mid-August. What can you say about this great show? Wizard is one of the most dealer friendly show promoters around and you can always count on them to put on a super show. Sales at this show were excellent, and as a bonus we were able to connect with an old time collector here and buy about 450 Golden Age books of all sorts, proving once again that Wizard shows are well worth setting up at for varied reasons. Thanks Brenda! Some sales of note at these two shows were as follows:

Golden Age: *Spy Smasher* #1 3.0 \$700, #7 6.5 \$450; *Detective* #32 1.0 \$600, #37 app. 6.5 \$1500; *Xmas Comics* #2 1.8 \$200; *Holiday Comics* #1 3.0 \$275; *Gift Comics* #2 3.5 \$325; *Champion* #2 (#1) 6.0 \$570, #6 7.0 \$360; *Human Torch* #21 6.5 \$670.

Atomic Age: *Lawbreakers Suspense Stories* #11 (severed tongues cover) 6.0 \$500; *Blue Beetle* #60 4.0 \$45.

Silver Age: *X-Men* #94 4.5 \$150; *Daredevil* #1 3.0 \$325; *Amazing Spider-Man* #8 CGC 9.4 \$4000.

Opinions expressed in CBM "Market Reports" are solely those of the individual dealers and collectors who contribute them. Prices vary by location, date of transaction and other factors.



Marketplace Mail

[continued from page 68]

faces have a trademark 5 o'clock shadow—can anyone tell me who this artist really is?). Also, I believe the same artist drew the cover of *Chamber of Chills* #13, and is definitely not Howard Nostrand and Bob Powell. Did they ever actually team up? Powell and Nostrand were, in my opinion, Harvey's best artists and both their styles were very distinct. Kronenberg's research into who did the cover art on *Chamber of Chills* #10 ("Cave of Death") couldn't have been too exhaustive—it is clearly signed "Lee Elias" on the bottom left. "Byron Bailey" should be Bernard Bailly (no E) as shown on the *Weird Mysteries* #4 cover (look to the right of the dagger tip). The cover for *Horrific* #7 does not show a city block—the bars in the windows of the building indicate it to be a prison courtyard. The author's habit of calling the cover art "paintings" becomes somewhat irksome as well.

But enough nitpicking. Steve Kronenberg's genuine excitement for this genre is appreciated, and his comparisons to pulp covers are right on the money. The color cover reproductions were worth the price of the magazine alone.

By the way, I have one question. Can anyone tell me why EC submitted to censorship in *Tales From the Crypt* #38 and *Vault of Horror* #32? I've read every book on EC, Gaines, Feldstein, etc. that I can find and I still don't know.

Anyway, thanks for a quality issue, and keep up the good work.

Aiden Whitty
St. Catherines, ON

You are correct in stating that the covers to Crypt #38 and Vault #32 were changed to make them less gory, but this was not done by "submitting to censorship." There was no outside agency (like the Comics Code Authority) which requested these changes. I am pretty sure that Bill and Al made these changes voluntarily in an attempt to avoid the criticisms of horror comics which were just starting to snowball at that time. Roger Hill, do you agree?

RC

61

by Michelle Nolan

This Month it's 1961

By 1961, comic books were as clean and as non-controversial as they would ever become. But it was still a wonderful year, especially if you liked creative approaches to costume heroes.

The Comics Code Authority symbol had been appearing in the upper right corner of comics for six years. Except for a few titles from longtime second-tier publishers ACG and Prize, along with Classics Illustrated from Gilberton and the Dennis the Menace franchise, the pesky small publishers had all totally disappeared.

Dell, with less than a year from the end of its longtime partnership with Western Publishing—and the split that led Western to its Gold Key imprint in 1962—was still virtually tied with National (DC) at the top of an all-too-often stagnant heap.

Dell produced 378 comic books in 1961, including many one-shots, and DC published 338, giving the industry less diversity than ever. Their 716 issues represented nearly half the total of 1,508 newsstand comic books that year—and perhaps as much as three-quarters of all the circulation. Almost all the rest were divided among Charlton (282 issues)—the comic book equivalent of baseball's journeyman player—Harvey (177), Marvel before it was re-labeled Marvel (122) and the Archie Series (107).

There were no genuine crime comics, no real horror comics. There were still lots of more or less generic western, war and romance titles, but these had been toned down almost beyond recognition when compared with their violent, racy and far more vibrant counterparts of a decade earlier.

There were also lots and lots of funny animal comics, plenty of television and movie adaptations, and numerous humorous titles involving kids both big and little.

In 1961—the year in which men first flew into space, both from the Soviet Union and the United States—there were only a handful of science fiction titles, albeit several good ones such as DC's *Mystery in Space* with Adam Strange, *Strange Adventures* with The Atomic Knights, and *Tales of the Unexpected* with Space Ranger.

There were still enough surprises, though, to give the true comic connoisseur chills of delight during the year John F. Kennedy was inaugurated as President.

From a historic standpoint, the most important comic book published in 1961 was doubtless *The Fantastic Four* #1 (Nov) from Marvel, not that anyone could have suspected that fact then. Martin Goodman's venerable firm was far better known for the likes of *Millie the Model* and *Patsy Walker*.

At the time, the non-costumed version of the FF seemed more like an offbeat version of DC's four-man team of daredevils, The Challengers of the Unknown, than anything resembling DC's year-old Justice League of America concept. I remember spotting *FF* #1 on the drug store rack and buying this issue purely out of curiosity, probably because of the name more than anything else. Even the name, *The Fantastic Four*, sounded a bit like a put-on.

Nor could anyone have suspected that Marvel would be destined to spring so many more surprises in the 1962-64 period. Such was not the case with DC, however. The company, still then known as National Comics, came up with several wonderful developments

and revivals in the wake of its numerous 1956-60 innovations.

The most important surprise, of course, was the revival of the Golden Age Flash in *The Flash* #123 in "The Flash of Two Worlds," one of the most influential stories in pop culture history. That led to hundreds of stories, popular right up to the present day, about the revived versions of Golden Age heroes and heroines.

Whether you were 13 years old in 1961, and knew Golden Age characters only in a back-issue sense, or you were



33, and were there from the start of the Golden Age, you had to be there to feel the emotional wallop on that momentous day 43 years ago when *The Flash* #123 popped up on the stands. If you loved comic books, there had never been



anything like this. In those days, when fanzines were just beginning, the vast majority of fans had no idea what to expect on “new comic book day” at the newsstands. The Golden Age Flash was an absolutely stunning development. The impact can’t be understated.

DC produced several more surprises. The Silver Age versions of Hawkman and The Atom debuted in *Brave and the Bold* #34 and *Showcase* #34, respectively. After two decades of swimming around as a backup character, a Silver Age version of Aquaman also appeared in *Showcase*, setting the stage for his own long-running title. And DC’s other long-suffering backup costume hero, Green Arrow, became the first “new” member of the Justice League in *JLA* #4.

There was at least one delight from rejuvenated DC every month in 1961, including the first Batman annual, a Secret Origins annual that brought everyone up to speed on DC’s burgeoning variety of costume heroes, and the third and fourth Superman 25-cent reprint giants. And who could possibly have guessed that the introduction of Pete Ross in *Superboy* #86 would pave the way for a black version of the character on a hit cable television show four decades later? With

state-of-the-art special effects and a compelling storyline, no less, in *Smallville*.

Other than The Fantastic Four, the few fantasy heroes from other companies were less than successful, including The Jaguar from Archie and Magic Agent from ACG. And I remember being disappointed when The Phantom never reappeared from license-holder Harvey after the last of his eight *Harvey Hits* appearances in #48—until *The Ghost Who Walks* turned up as a regular Gold Key title a year later.

Harvey, though, scored a major success in 1961 with the beginning of its Richie Rich franchise. *Richie Rich Millions* #1 (Sep)—apparently intended as a one-shot at the time—was the second of a zillion Richie Rich titles in the 1960s and ‘70s and appeared concurrently with *Richie Rich* #6.

One of the last remaining links to the Golden Age of B westerns—which ended in theaters in the early 1950s but continued on television for about another decade—disappeared when Roy Rogers hit the end of his regularly published happy trails in comics with Dell’s #145 (Sep-Nov 1961). In retrospect, it’s mind-boggling to realize that the last issue of *Roy Rogers* and the first issue of *The Fantastic Four* were in the same comic book racks!

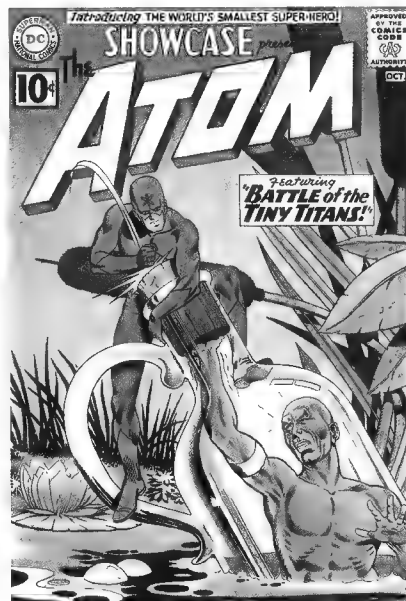
By the way, Dell often provided a hint of a title’s impending demise in that era when it dropped a comic’s publishing frequency from monthly to bi-monthly or quarterly.

DC bid farewell to the remnants of its original western line with *All-Star Western* #119 and *Western Comics* #85, both of which always featured characters created for comic books. Meanwhile, three of the most popular comic characters of the 1950s appeared in their final issues in 1961—*Dick Tracy* #145 (Apr) and *Joe Palooka* #118 (Mar) from Harvey and fashion queen *Katy Keene* #62 (Oct) from Archie.

Tip Top Comics, by then 25 years old

and the last link to the original newspaper reprint anthology titles of the 1930s, vanished with Dell’s #225 (May-Jul).

One of the biggest mysteries of 1961 is how and why *Prize* (Crestwood) continued to hang on with only three titles, all bimonthlies—*Young Romance* (which pioneered romance comics in 1947), *Young Love* (one of the first imitators) and *Black Magic* (a vastly tamed down version of what was once a nifty pre-Comics Code horror title). The two romance titles hung on until DC bought and rejuvenated them in 1963. *Black Magic*, in contrast, suffered a fate weirder than its title—it was converted early in 1962 into the three-issue run of *Cool Cat*, an unorthodox teen humor strip based on beatniks.



Finally, no, I didn’t forget what made 1961 anything but a wonderful year in one awful respect. Many baby boomers experienced their first taste of inflation when comic books went from 10 cents to 12 cents by the end of the year. But what would all you forlorn folks have thought if you could have foreseen prices above \$2? Worse than gas! 🛢️

Book Review

by Paul Gravett



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The Complete Maus
by Art Spiegelman
(Pantheon Books)

\$35.00

ISBN 0-679-40641-7

Yossel April 19, 1943

by Joe Kubert

(ibooks, New York, NY, 2003)

\$24.95

ISBN 0-7434-7516-X

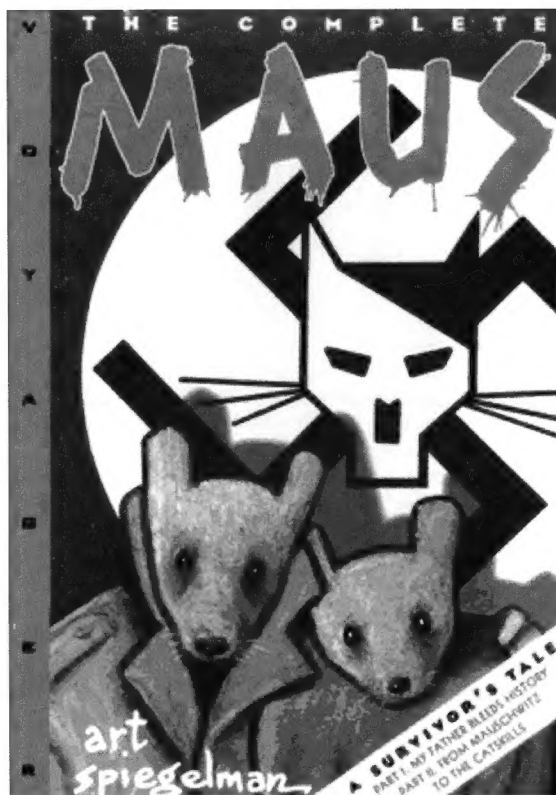
For many people who had not looked at comics since their childhood, or would give the strips in their morning paper only a cursory glance, Art Spiegelman's *Maus* in 1986 came as something of a revelation. Here was the unflinching family history of Spiegelman's father Vladek, a Polish Jew and survivor of the Auschwitz concentration camp, combined with the present-day life of the author in New York, approaching 40, as he is crafting the book in an effort to rebuild his relationship with his father and to understand himself. *Maus* not only gives a first-hand account of the Second World War but is also a bold attempt to address with honesty the pain of today's children of survivors.

Any reservations that someone unfamiliar with comics may have are soon swept away by the intelligence and intensity with which Spiegelman makes his modest, urgent black lines on paper engage the reader. His pages seem so unaffected and direct; it is almost as if

you are holding the one surviving manuscript of his hand-drawn originals. He intentionally took great pains to simplify his drawings, so they would blend with his texts and form a seamless narrative whole, cartooning as handwriting. This interweaving of the verbal and visual enables comics to approximate "a mental language," as Spiegelman put it, that he believes comes closer to real human thought than either words or pictures alone.

Some people may have misgivings about daring to deal with the Holocaust using the strip cartoon, and especially using the central conceit of portraying Jews as mice and Nazis as cats. In this, Spiegelman is not only harking back to the tradition of cat-and-mouse antics in early animation and comics, from Felix the Cat and Mickey Mouse to Tom and Jerry, but he is also well aware of the legacy of racist propaganda that employed such imagery. Film historians have noted parallels between early animated mouse movies and American caricatures of black people. The mouse metaphor becomes even more pertinent when we learn that Hitler had compared the Jews to vermin and used rat-exterminating pesticide Zyklon B in the death camps. So Spiegelman's "funny animal" convention takes on an added power, while at the same time he deliberately subverts it to expose its absurdities and the lies of racial stereotyping.

Precisely because of its understatement and intimacy, the first volume of *Maus* gave people a fresh insight into the Nazi atrocities and their echoing after-effects. Published in 1986 after being serialized in *Raw* magazine, the book climbed the best-seller lists and was widely praised. Umberto Eco hailed Spiegelman as "the greatest American writer." With help from a Guggenheim fellowship, Art was able to complete the second and final volume in 1991 and a year later it won him a special Pulitzer Prize. The two volumes are now compiled into one complete collection. Anyone who has read *Maus* can never view comics in the same way again.



I have no idea if *Maus* influenced Joe Kubert to tell his own family's history in *Yossel*. I also see little benefit in comparing these two works. For example, a recent BBC TV discussion

programme, *Battle of the Books*, pitted *Maus* against Thomas Keneally's 1982 novel *Schindler's Ark*, adapted into the Spielberg movie *Schindler's List*. *Maus* actually won the audience vote but as the presenter rightly pointed out, both books are vital documents on the Holocaust for everyone to read; the same is true of *Maus* and *Yossel*.

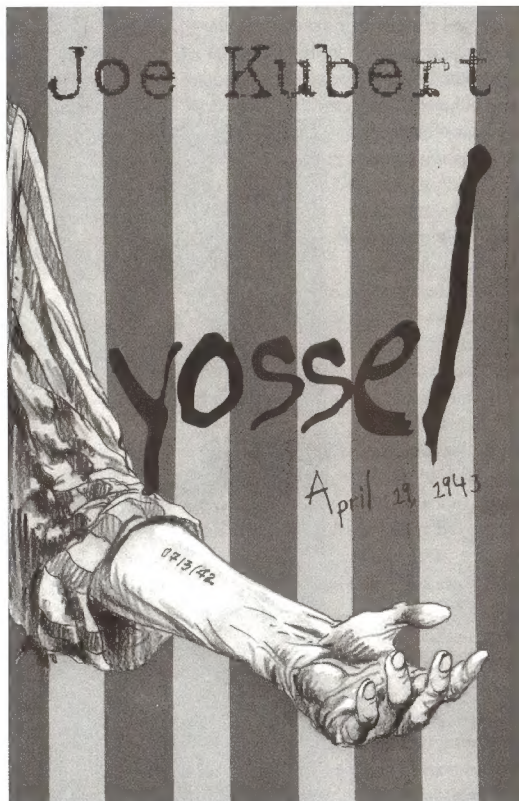
In his solo graphic novel, Kubert takes us back to November 1926, when little Joe was a baby of only two months, and he and his parents and elder sister left their eastern Polish hometown of Yzeran behind them. Earlier that year, in the spring, the Kubert family had been refused a visa to sail to America, because Joe's mother was still pregnant with him. They were Jewish, and he would have grown up in Poland as Yossel. That November, they tried again and managed to join a crowded boat in Southampton docks taking European emigrants across to the New World and a new life where he became one of the century's most versatile and acclaimed comic book storytellers.

In this 120-page hardback published in 2003, Kubert has chosen raw, uninked pencil as the perfect medium to convey the harrowing immediacy of the Holocaust. Joe re-writes the course of his life from that pivotal November in 1926 when his family was allowed to leave for America and imagines how different his life would have been, if he, as Yossel, had been forced to stay and endure the horrors inflicted by Hitler. Except that this is no "imaginary story." As Kubert notes, "There's no question in my mind that what you are about to read could have

happened."

His alternative autobiography begins and ends on that fateful day in the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. Yossel's drawing talents are his solace and his inspiration. They win him favors from the Germans, but can't save his parents and sister from being deported to the death camps. Rather than meet the same fate, he and others left in the ghetto choose to die fighting against their Nazi persecutors.

Like Spiegelman's *Maus*, Kubert's achievement is making us feel as if we



have stumbled across the real, unfinished sketches. From them we come to know young Yossel himself, a teenager, barely a man, speaking through history to our hearts. In Joe's words, creating this book "was very personal, a little scary, and sort of cleansing" At the age of 77, he has given life to his other self and allowed him to give us his lasting testimony. 

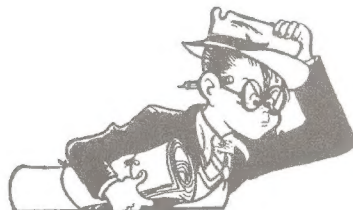
Funnies Farrago: Jewish Comics?

[continued from page 21]

Reuben Flagg in 1983, he could make the character explicitly Jewish, perhaps the first time for the title character of a comic book. Said Chaykin: "I'm no longer afraid, ashamed, or uninterested enough in my personal background to keep it out of the work. I'm no longer a Jew masquerading as a gentile through comics."

Comics created over the next twenty years became more and more introspective and artistically ambitious, and the issues in Jewish history and culture could be faced directly, not metaphorically, just as the issues in all ethnicities could be encountered. Jews have a huge role in the creation of the medium from the very beginning, but in my view, their influence at the beginning was as artists and creative personalities, not as Jews.

Their Jewish heritage influenced them, surely, and therefore influenced what they created and how they created it. But the driving force in their work was probably their common humanity rather than their Jewish heritage. Comics are not a Jewish phenomenon, as denominating Superman a golem seems to imply. Superman was not so much golem as he was the enactment of an adolescent daydream. But for those of us who love the medium, we're lucky comics got started in New York where there were communities of Jews whose traditions of artistic enterprise nurtured the infant art form—just as surely as Max Gaines nurtured the talent he saw in Shelly Mayer and Mayer, in turn, manifested it in Scribby, making his young protagonist an energetic participant in the entrepreneurial world around him. 



WE'VE GOT YOU COVERED!

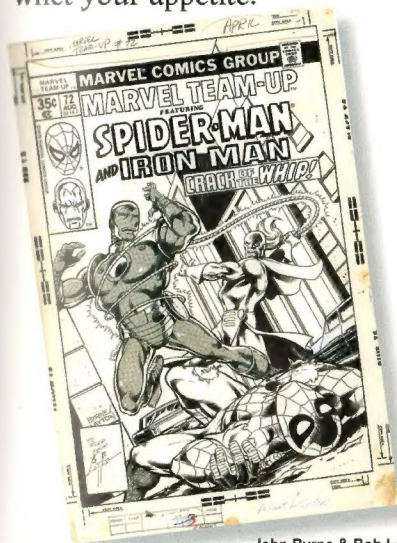
Original art collecting is one of the fastest-growing areas of our hobby, and Heritage Comics' upcoming sale, to be held November 8-9, 2004 in our Dallas offices, has enough great material to satisfy even the most demanding collector. Here are just a few examples to whet your appetite:



Warren Kremer –
Playful Little Audrey #3 Cover (Harvey, 1957)



Curt Swan & Murphy Anderson –
Superman #228 Cover (DC, 1970)



John Byrne & Bob Layton –
Marvel Team-Up #72 Cover (Marvel, 1978)



Johnny Craig –
Crypt of Terror #17 Cover (EC, 1950)



Wally Wood & Dan Adkins –
Dynamo #3 Cover (Tower, 1967)

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COMIC BOOK MARKETPLACE #117



In Comic Book Marketplace #116 the focus of the three-part series about "How the Jews Created the Comic Book Industry" by Arie Kaplan was on creators of the Golden Age. In *CBM* #117 we continue with Part II of this series by looking at Silver Age creators like Julius Schwartz, Stan Lee and Jack Kirby.



The second part of Arie Kaplan's "How Jews Created the Comic Book Industry," examines the Silver Age.

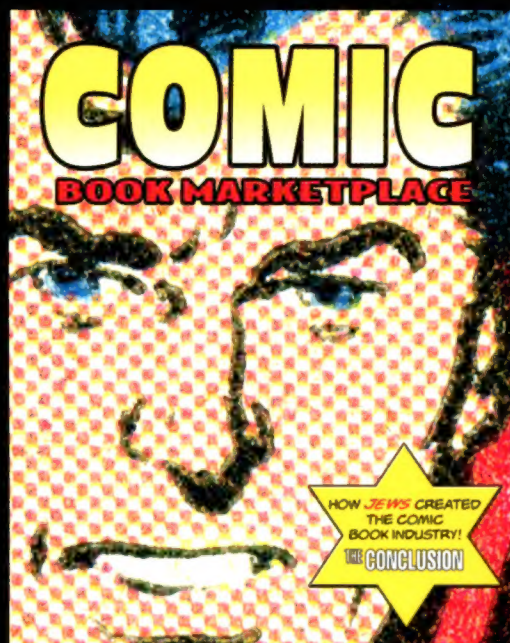


Bill Baker interviews Jim Steranko about his new book with Vanguard Productions *Domino Lady*.



Will Murray examines Robert Kanigher's creation The Metal Men.

COMIC BOOK MARKETPLACE #118



In *Comic Book Marketplace* #118 we conclude our three-part series on the Jewish origins of comic books. We'll take a look at Art Spiegelman's *Maus*, Joe Kubert's *Yossel* and Will Eisner's *Fagin the Jew*. And, as always, our regular columnists will surprise and delight you with their comics lore.

COMIC BOOK MARKETPLACE #119



Comic Book Marketplace #119 examines the crossovers between network radio shows and comic books. Also this issue, the second part of our examination of illustration great Norman Saunders.